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Martin Kraemer Liehn - book draft on revolutionary correspondence

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*short title:* Networking for Class War 1903-1956, letters by Nin – Gramsci – Serge and friends

400 words about the author, as requested by the publisher:

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Martin Kraemer Liehn was born 1971 in the FRG. He spent most of his life studying and working abroad in Australia, Madagascar, Cuba, Siberia, China and Europe (Russia, Ukraine, Italy, Estonia, the UK and Spain). He started his career as an agricultural labourer in France, Rumania and Poland. Unsatisfied with the wage conditions, he decided to undergo professional training, finishing it with a "Meisterbrief Landwirt" in 1999. Travelling and working in other countries and continents, his interests diversified. After painting for half a decade under academic circumstances in Kassel, Warszawa and Firenze, he is now convinced that artistic production in late Capitalism must be anonymous, collective and historically well-researched. Until 2008 he has been able to spend some 250.000 € in public funding on collective projects of giant political fresco wallpainting.

Simultaneously, four of the G8 countries up to now tried to trial and jail him for his attempts at collectively sabotaging commercial globalization.

Martin Kraemer is member of the biggest trade union in the world, ver.di, and of a Socialist mass party he is ashamed to mention for the constant corporatist failure to realize its promises. He has been living in Eastern Poland for 7 years to compile a PhD on agricultural labour and revolutionary politics (1863-2000) in one single village between Belarus and the expanding European Union. In 2002 he entered a post-doc “Junior” professorship scheme, “Emmy Noether Stipendium”, mounted by the Deutsche Forschungsgesellschaft (DFG) to study council communism in the Russian, Czech and Cuban Revolution. In spite of the EU cultural boycott of Cuba, enforced by Berlusconi and Aznar in 2003, Martin Kraemer continued to work for the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party and its Historical Institute. This decision ultimately led to DFG breaking its 6-year+ commitment to finance research until early professorship. Martin Kraemer has welcome this forced drop-out in 2005 with naïve class-pride, learnt to live on ten times less money and spent the last years in some 15 Soviet, Czech and Cuban archives. He keeps record of his militant “investigation in progress” in a series of documented discussion papers called “Agitatorka” for global and anti-commercial distribution (No. 5 “Revolutionary collectives” has been discussed at the European Social Forum 2008 in Malmö).



book draft on revolutionary correspondence

*complete title:*

From Structures and Flows to partisan Networking for genuine Class War: André Nin (E) – Tania (USSR) and Antonio (I) Gramsci – Victor Serge (B) – Henk Sneevliet (NL) – Rolf Katz (D) – Karel Fišer Michalec (CZ) and their personal political Correspondence from 1929 to 1950 (1903-1956)

*subtitle:*

Retracing the First Generation of Comintern Internationalists in their Unfinished Struggle against the emerging New World Order and the Bipolar Labelling Techniques which made it possible

All material history we know is the product of class conflict.<sup>1</sup> Yet, in our heads, trained to serve and sell products suiting the interests of the ruling classes, this can never be grasped and realised with all the necessary violence. Instead of pursuing genuine, i.e. collective material interest we allow

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<sup>1</sup> The time limits of this study are set accordingly: from the class-based split in the Dutch and Russian Social Democrat parties 1903-1911 to the establishment of a new basis for co-opting the ruling strata of this break-away-society back into liberal world rule 1956, a turn acutely preceded by Stalin's land lease which turned the Soviet Union into a net contributor to Washington consensus making from 1941 right into the 1970s when obligations of even a wider scale took their toll to end the breakaway hegemony of 1903\_#14; compare the breakaway former slave colony Haiti 1804ff being turned into a net contributor to perpetuate French colonialism with forced payments right into the 1920s, #HA 2004\_#11.

our consciousness to be fragmented into individualist atomism. The excessive system-friendly radiation this process sets free, creates an investment-friendly atmosphere which permits us little more than to mock our human faculties with the disciplined life-long distribution, promotion and consumption of bourgeois label production.<sup>2</sup>

Yes, we can get breathtakingly close to classless intercourse in our personal relations here and now, no doubt. But the most fabulous works of the ongoing Social Revolution are doubtlessly neither made in bed nor in letter writing. Physically, they are bound to happen on the streets and beyond: associating against the rules in the former capitalist torture chambers of unfree labour: the factory, the tractor, the local police station, the ever-precarious workplace of a scientist under Neoliberalism.

For our 7 protagonists of this study, male and female, this was probably much clearer than it has been for us until now. Yet, they devoted hilarious time making love and writing letters. They actually wrote thousands each, Henk Sneevliet,<sup>3</sup> who collected most of them,<sup>4</sup> wrote thousands each year. Here, we put to your disposition a sample of 5 cross-border correspondences in 12 letters exemplary letters on 25 pages. Why is this but a drop in oceans of revolutionary letter-writing? Should we doubt that their authors were serious

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<sup>2</sup> According to Noam Chomsky, bourgeois academies are precisely paid for silencing the issues socially at stake\_#15

<sup>3</sup> Henk Sneevliet (NL)\_#8

<sup>4</sup> Henk Sneevliet collection\_#9

about their explicit decision to live their lives for the sake of Social Revolution?

Yes. We should invest doubt wherever we can still afford to. As a matter of fact, only a God can help those who need heroes beyond doubt. As no one of the 8 comrades contributing to this text saw any relevance in religion, you should seek for other texts if you positively do need heroes. If you want instead to make friends through time and space, you are highly welcome to enter. We, common workers toiling in the predominantly greasy and dreary making of a Social Revolution, can show you things, a bourgeois scientist can never show you. Across our simple words, you can enter the innermost chambers where bliss and tears are made, places even the late Soviet cultural industrialist Tarkovski\_#16 shied away from showing.

So this is all freely accessible? Yes, even in Soviet times after 1956, if you wanted, you could have seen them. How come, nobody went to read then? People are afraid. And these inhibitions by prejudice, as Maksim Gorkij made so bitterly clear in his final work,<sup>5</sup> are the legitimate remnants of what had once been the very truth, though now a knife in the spine of social progress. As in stalker\_#, there seems to have been a kind of accident. What do we really know about accidents of such scale? We already mentioned the radiation issuing from the bourgeois decomposition of collective faculties.

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<sup>5</sup> Erstveroeffentlichung und Internetarchiv, unfortunately with countless typewriting errors.

Chernobyl is now said to have killed 200.000 people. If unbroken, the survival of Capitalism on earth against the breathtaking revolutionary tide of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will hardly chance to leave some 200.000 people alive if we believe the scientific evidence the capitalist machine itself has brought forward up to now.

If we believe their words, our 7 protagonists had little doubt that their own personal death and thus the end of their political commitment were but a mere episode in an ongoing up-hill collective struggle. And as a matter of fact, literally nobody managed to survive more than a slim dozen of years under Capital rule after writing the very lines documented here. Henk Sneevliet and his Dutch comrades in armed resistance were shot by a Fascist German execution squad. Antonio Gramsci<sup>6</sup> died after more than a decade of ill-treatment in Italian custody. Another four managed to die more traditionally. To be able to do that, they had to retreat acutely out of the direct reach of Capitalist hegemony into niches of a rather depressing provincianity: Rolf in Peronist Argentina, Karel<sup>7</sup> in the hampered working-class showcase of the CSSR, Tania in a curiously protected hibernating homeland for veterans showing extreme formal loyalty and keeping always strategically close to the Moscow Kremlin walls of rotting fame. Victor made it, most progressively as seen in the “longue-durée”, to revolutionary Mexico, alas, a revolution remaining as nothing more than a hang-over from

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<sup>6</sup> Antonio Gramsci\_#6

<sup>7</sup> Karel Fišer Michalec (CZ)\_#12

the process halted after 1911 to be reinstated with considerable uneasiness only on New Year 1994.

Consequently, Victor Serge<sup>8</sup> died in a nauseating depression and practically without any friends. His most intimate pen pal of 1936f, Henk Sneevliet, could have been one of his last real friendships in life. Why they lost hold of each other in spite of all closeness the patient reader of these pages will be able to judge by her- and himself in half an hour.

And what happened with André Nin?<sup>9</sup> Well, historical science has neatly evolved something close to an answer how this revolutionary career was brought to a standstill.<sup>10</sup> Personally, I find the question rather more productive. Only hours after his disappearance, the mot d'ordre "Where is Nin?" sort of globally replaced the answer given by Red October 1917 - "All power to the Soviets!" - accepted now as the genuine begin of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus "Where is Nin?" marks a breaking point in revolutionary paradigmata, a point of no return where labelling on either side of the viciously persisting class divide does not help you a bit to gain terrain. Labelling "Anarchist", "Syndicalist", "Trotskyist", "Stalinist" will actually quite strangely deter you from the material issues at stake in ongoing class war.<sup>11</sup> So, if you can afford it, look at their real words instead! Victor Serge, e.g., was formulating on the basis of a personal experience formed in a Soviet internship of more than 16 years, eye-witnessing almost the entire social

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<sup>8</sup> Victor Serge (B)\_#7

<sup>9</sup> André Nin life line\_#3

<sup>10</sup> Tossdorf Nins death\_#4

<sup>11</sup> class war\_#2



process as a militant investigator from the Northern Commune to the Moscow Trials. He never uses the discourse blocker “Stalinisme” (writing French), instead he risks his own life, fighting “stalinien”-type politics, never shying away from detecting such elements among his closest personal friends and allies. In spring 1937, as the result of some unpredictable spontaneous collective creativity, exchanging letters with Henk Sneevliet almost on a daily basis for the sake of revolutionary Spain, they jointly evolve a mode of fractional agency they choose to call “revolutionary opportunism”. Serge gives a damn about defending the Soviet Union after his deportation 1936, but, indeed, he would do everything to defend the real common ownership of means of production he has experienced there.

Yet the concepts of “Anarchism”<sup>12</sup>, “Syndicalism”<sup>13</sup>, “Commun(al)ism”<sup>14</sup>, “Trotskyism”<sup>15</sup> and “Leninism”<sup>16</sup> can be

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<sup>12</sup> For a most practical example of militant Anarchism see Lenin’s April 1917 theses in *State and Revolution*.

<sup>13</sup> How can we characterize Syndicalism? Certain circles among the 17000 working class comrades of Henk Sneevliet in the Dutch Syndicalist trade union NAS argued in Summer 1936 against armament help for their Catalan CNT-FAI. They were sincerely convinced that only economic warfare can bring down class rule. Henk Sneevliet took them by their word, and brought some 2000 Dutch Gulden of their workpay savings to Barcelona in October 1936. The Spanish comrades then decided that the most responsible use of this trust in their ongoing economic class war was... buying arms. And so they did. Nobody protested.

<sup>14</sup> Evolving revolutionary agency from the experience of the Paris Commune rather than traditional Commun(al)ism from a rather hypothetical state of human affairs before the onslaught of patriarchy, “Urkommunismus”, Murray Bookchin

of a certain help nonetheless to grasp the message of the following pages if we are intellectually sincere enough to admit that they are but labels in our minds deformed by recent and all its preceding developments in globalising commodity fetishism, the one and only basis of Capitalist rule besides private ownership. To be precise, our 7 protagonists were simultaneously acting in an Anarchic, Syndicalist, Commu(na)list, Trotskyite and Leninist sense. And to top the bonfire of banalities, we can try to sell a new label for them. Yes, more than anything else they were all 7 of them thorough and thus never out-spoken “Zinionevists”. By the time of the first letter documented here, David Isaakovich Zinionev\_#17 had himself complacently assisted to be reduced to a mere shadow of the political role he had once played in advancing something close to Global Social Revolution, 1917-1923. Equally, he had hardly ever written anything as bright as his comrade opponent Bukharin let alone Trotsky with the later able to virtually reduce Sneevliet to less than a mutter in a blindingly brilliant German language correspondence of 1930, taken up only after Sneevliet’s political maturation during months in a Dutch prison 1933. It is therefore not far-fetched to ask provocatively: has Zinionev done anything at all worth remembering apart from happening to be in a peer-group of politically more daring decadents than he could ever become himself? Well, together with Kamenev, he had had the guts to resist the sect-like group pressure of his inner party circles and try to

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<sup>15</sup> Rev hist

<sup>16</sup> Barnaul komsomolec

veto the Anarcho-Bolshevik Petrograd putsch in 1917. Looking closer, we can detect the genius of team spirit at work in this acting collective with more accuracy. Zinoviev was contributing nothing more or less than what was actually acutely missing among them in the strict limits of their in-group of friends changing the course of the world as we know it. So, he developed his strongest faculty neither in words. As a matter of fact, throughout the early Soviet success story, Lenin never ceased to define his profession rather modestly as a “Literator, partrabotnik (writer, party worker)”. Nor did Zinoviev reach perfection in taking over derelict command structures as Trotsky did with his characteristically sleepless hyper-activity, drawing up an internationalist “Red Army” on scratch, marooning Kazakhs and awkward peasant conscripts who had not yet had the chance to learn what Bolshevism had done with their parents to secure their very own daily ration of food, back stepping their closest ally Makhno three times in a row after each cease-fire making peace with Imperial Germany, Poland, Menshevik Georgia and a rather Bourgeois Far Eastern Republic (DVR) instead. Quite differently, Zinoviev grew into the role of a comparatively laborious networker for intellectual excellence in collective production proving so highly efficient for social change that the readers of this journal sometimes seem to think about little else. He managed to perpetuate the development known only from a few weeks in the Paris Commune 1871 over a decade in the municipalities of revolutionary Leningrad. Quite parallelly, he happened to chair the Communist International. This was a post designed purposeful, i.e. with Lenin’s consent, to keep him away from

the course of Soviet decision making. Quite to the contrary though, this arrangement rather empowered him to modestly achieve just the opposite: intervening on an unprecedented global scale by literally making up the first generation of globally interconnected Social Revolutionaries in World History. Let us take a step back to mind the gap. The networking which proved able to powering the conspiracy of Babeuf's friends against the rollback of the French Revolution in 1796 linked some local Paris activists with a provincial figure, i.e. Babeuf himself, and an Italian emigrée, making himself known later as Buonarotti – a name the dying Hölderlin in neighbouring Tübingen made his own in his purposefully assumed madness, evading martial persecution.<sup>17</sup> Quite differently, networking against the roll-back of the Soviet Revolution in 1936, instead, had notably matured from the madhouse asylum, and been able to act as a globally co-ordinated force within days. Why? Our 7 random example figures out of Zinoviev's network speak for themselves. Consoling Henk with an account of Mexican revolutionary art and its Indigena inspiration over the shock of the Moscow trials, Victor suggests him in the same movement to envisage a voyage to New York for staging anti-show trials. In the meantime, he feverishly acts to mount support for central Asian revolutionaries he happens to know personally and who are simply forgotten by Western campaigning for the "17 victims in Moscow". Henk – who has risked many of his most important Russian political

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<sup>17</sup> A footnote in the revolutionaries history which curiously evaded the minute attention of the Roter-Stern-edition cited in our paper abstract.

friendships as far back as 1923 giving support for Soviet Anarchist prisoners, years before he contributes to ally his Syndicalist trade union with the Moscow Profintern - answers with a joke, told to him in Peking and, drawing from his Jakarta experience, mobilises Rolf to get the Indian Marxist Roy into better company in his exile's isolation. How did this breathtaking global combination of revolutionary intelligence start off? Not words by Zinoviev, or his watery political guidelines, nor any intellectual faculties above the average of his outstandingly brilliant institution changed the courses of life of our 7 protagonists. Much more modestly, their life happened to be changed rather due to some simple invitations, issued indeed by Zinoviev, namely to assist in the making of Comintern Conferences. When you have finished reading this compilation, you might or might not agree with the assessment forming slowly and rather reluctantly in my mind during a month of work on transcribing, translating, annotating and commenting the letters documented for you below: Nothing more and nothing less than some invitations at the beginning of the 1920s seem to have made the trick. Serge and Sneevliet most casually speak about their meeting during the second Comintern conference. The most known posture of Gramsci has been taken as a group photograph on the eve of the forth conference (documented in this study). His friendship with Tania Schucht, Nins experience to evoke such a polycentric international secretariat as that of the POUM 1936 in Barcelona, Karel Fišer's<sup>18</sup> swift faculties to change institutional work-places and the sponsoring of the

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<sup>18</sup> Karel Fišer Michalec (CZ)\_#11

young Rolf Katz's outstanding economic research achievements<sup>19</sup> - all this acutely heeded to networks and modes of complementary interaction set up under the modest auspices of Zinoviev. Who was this Zinoviev then, whom nobody of the 7 cares to mention in any of their 15000 words documented below? Nobody could have known better than Karel Fišer Michalec. In 1922, leaving the Czechoslovak Republic illegalised and prosecuted at the age of 21, he could literary hold on to nothing but one of his notoriously false passports. Only months after hitting the road, he virtually became one of the countless internationalist citizens of the Early Soviet Union. But what made him survive later his brilliant analysis of the centrist Gottwald-putch in 1927, a year before it actually happened.<sup>20</sup> Returning to the pulsing cultural life of the Prague working class he then had to keep to its institutions of a rather Social Democrat party.<sup>21</sup> This did not prevent him from developing a fulminate stance of an audacious *longue-durée* in Prague's bourgeois high society actually chairing the notorious Re-Club\_#20, a sting in the heart of two very different Beneš regimes\_#19 and German Nazi occupation in the city (and thus a first rate target for at least three major intelligence service interventions), underground resistance work under Nazi occupation, his revolutionary stance on the Prague barricades of May 1945 and subsequent council work in his workplace,<sup>22</sup> his trade

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<sup>19</sup> Rolf Katz (D)\_#10

<sup>20</sup> Jilek's hatred

<sup>21</sup> předsedou Revoluční závodní rady Práva lidu\_#21

<sup>22</sup> vydáváním prvního svobodného Rudého práva a Práce (zachycování a veřejňování zpráv zahraničního rozhlasu\_#22

union militancy,<sup>23</sup> his breathtaking stance to oust the very right-wing Social Democrats<sup>24</sup> he had used to hibernate the 1930s, his pioneer role for making Czech Socialist film to how we know it today, his courage to re-enter the only superficially renewed<sup>25</sup> Communist party and fight against his continued discrimination following 1927, his highly life-endangering friendship with Slansky 1945-1952, gosh, how could he survive all this when every single adventure had a deathly risk in stall for him and his wife? For this it needed a little more than just an Early Soviet socialisation. Additionally, the double orphan Karel, born into a Check-speaking bourgeois Vienna which had ceased to exist when he had to start to work,<sup>26</sup> found a well-meaning mentor in Zinionev. Within months, active as an exile secretary in the youth International (KIM)\_#18 he learnt to be useful in the most productive vicinity of Zinionev. So at a much younger age Karel developed a professional profile fitting into Zinionevs surrounding as organically as André Nin had become a daily help for Lev Trotzky in the meantime. If we allow Rainer Maria Rilke to sustain the provocative modesty of calling his commitment to the daily life and work of August Rodin the task of a mere “private secretary”, then, yes, we can call Nin

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<sup>23</sup> srpne 1945 nastoupil do služeb Vydatelstva Práce\_#23

<sup>24</sup> manifestem proti straně\_#24

<sup>25</sup> květnu 1945, když jsem viděl masový nábor do strany\_#25

<sup>26</sup> And he started to work in the notoriously revolutionary township of Varnsdorf, where Peter Weiss spend his youth and where a campaign against private ownership in Czech industry was started with a mass demonstration in 1947 which alarmed Socialist ministers in Prague to the outmost, comp. Varnsdorf\_#33

and Fišer private secretaries in the 1920s. To put it more progressively we can make use of the terminology proposed by their contemporary Ludwik Fleck.<sup>27</sup> As junior partners with full rights, they assisted in the most progressive team-work of their times, changing life and work in the Soviet Union and thus beyond the limits of this curious one sixth of the planet. Without exception, our 7 protagonists were ready to give up all remnants of a bourgeois identity - including the false promise of individualist happiness commonly attached to it - to resocialise their remaining modest material existence into an intellectual collective of unprecedented impact:

- Sneevliet accepting to be thrown thousands of miles away from his militant political working environment in Indonesia and Amsterdam to the Chinese capital for years on end, becoming with Joffe the ambassador of Zinoviev's collective institution in the Far East;
- Antonio Gramsci accepting at the dramatic personal expense of vicinity with Tania Schucht to become a Member of Parliament for the Communist International in Rome at a time when Italian bourgeoisie openly decided to finish up with any pseudo-democratic disguise of their past whatsoever;
- Katz, although fatally star-struck by Horkheimer and Adorno, choosing to study working class Dutch instead of Hegel's gruesome and cloudy grammar;
- and Victor Serge by keeping his Anarchist loyalty<sup>28</sup> to the Soviet ownership of the means of production wherever it

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<sup>28</sup> On the 20th of November 1920, just hours before the final crack down by Soviet forces on the allied Machno Republic and its official representation in the Ukrainean Soviet capital Khar'kov, Petr



proved a reality: from his failed rural Commune near Petrograd right until his forced Orenburg transportation.

Here they are all together, corresponding, letter writing in the youthful mouth of contemporary Empire leaving aside in those very years some monstrous egg-shells to start devouring itself as we happen to know it in 2009. The frightful intimacy inside this gluttony feels strangely akin. Who has eyes to read may read them now.

1<sup>st</sup> sample: our Correspondence between André Nin and Henk Sneevliet

(see reproduction 111, 112 and 113, transcribed character by character<sup>29</sup> and translated into British English<sup>30</sup> underneath)

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Kropotkin finished his work on his political testament, advocating Anarchist participation in the building of socialism. His own daughter and wife saw enough reasons to be openly furious with him already while he was putting this to paper.

<sup>29</sup> by the author with the substantial help by Jil Silberstein\_, Genève, known as major editor of Victor Serge's works\_.

<sup>30</sup> by the author, kindly proof-read by Tossdorf\_, Mainz, and Bernhard H. Bayerlein, Mannheim.

Le 8 juin 1937

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Mon cher Sneevliet, je profite du départ du cam. trustel pour t'adresser quelques mots.

Depuis ton dernier voyage, la situation s'est considérablement compliquée. La contre-révolution a fait des progrès sensibles, mais il n'y a pas lieu de perdre tout espoir. Les événements se déroulent de manière à ce que le prolétariat reste toujours combattif et n'est pas prêt à se laisser faire impunément. Des moments durs et difficiles nous attendent. On entend - mais ce serait la défection pure et simple que tout est déjà perdu. L'avenir immédiat nous réserve encore de grandes surprises. Quant au Parti, il tient bien. La journée de mai fut une épreuve qui a été vaincue. Non seulement nos positions, malgré la campagne acharnée que les ennemis ont menée, mais elles sont encore plus solides.

Capture111: A letter which nobody thought to be the last one, 1st page of our letter from André Nin to Henk Sneevliet, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1937; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 522, opis 1-delo 114: list 20.

La réaction contre le stalinisme s'accroît de jour en jour. L'air le combat  
aristocrate par ici il veut se casser les  
dents.

La grande trahison de notre révolution  
est celle des anarchistes. La ligne est épi-  
taque: combattive, héroïque, mais la direc-  
tion hérisse combattant et flisse le ca-  
verne en occasion. Attirer et mener  
à nos positions est la tâche centrale  
des jours.

Le congrès de Montevideo le 19 juin  
et un mois après on s'occupe de la  
félicité internationale. L'œuvre bien  
t'y a voir.

La œuvre guillotin, appelée à jouer un  
grand rôle pour le renouveau de  
nos révolutionnaires, est son père.  
L'œuvre qui sera accueillie avec  
satisfaction par tous les révolutionnaires.

À tu le d'antique de l'œuvre. C'est  
révélé. Le vieux s'avère capable  
pour être incapable de comprendre  
l'œuvre à voir à la révolution. Cependant  
d'ailleurs il utilise les vieux

Capture112: with the mounting direction of his lines  
constantly on the rise, 2nd page of our letter from André Nin  
to Henk Sneevliet, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1937; facsimile of RGASPI  
(Moscow) fond 522, opis 1- delo 114: list 21.

providés de l'organe de l'information à <sup>22</sup>  
chez aux italiens. C'est en Italie  
même au retour.  
Quant à ce renseignement en détail  
sur la situation. C'est un excellent  
camarade, dont nous regrettons le  
départ.  
Bonne nuit le bienvêtu, mais  
qui a cablé le coup. D'ailleurs,  
nous nous reverrons bientôt à Paris.  
Cordialement  
Sneevliet

Capture113: a signature which does not exactly indicate a self-effacing outlook on the future; according to its traces, the paper has obviously been carried in a place tightly fixed to round movements [of a body? a pocket in underwear?] reread and subsequently been refolded several times before being flattened into Sneevliet's archival registration where it has

*undergone another round of reshuffling leaving the bottom left diagonal marks, 3rd page of our letter from André Nin to Henk Sneevliet, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1937; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 522,1- delo 114: list 22.*

## FRENCH-I

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Martin Kraemer Liehn (Madrid)

*short title:* Networking for Class War 1903-1956,  
letters by Nin – Gramsci – Serge and friends

1<sup>st</sup> sample: our Correspondence between André Nin and  
Henk Sneevliet

(see reproduction 111, 112 and 113, transcribed letter  
by letter underneath and translated into British English  
in the following)

Transcription letter by letter from the original  
manuscript, *letter from André Nin to Henk Sneevliet, 8<sup>th</sup>  
June 1937; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 522, opis  
1- delo 114: list 20-22*<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> I am grateful to the French native speaker Jil Silberstein (Switzerland) for his valuable help and contextualizing comments in transcribing this document.

'le 8 juin 1937 [page] 1 20<sup>32</sup>

Mon cher Sneevliet, je profite du départ du cam[arade] Amstel pour t'adresser quelques mots.

Depuis ton dernier voyage, la situation s'est modifiée considérablement. La contre-révolution a fait des progrès sensibles, mais il n'y a pas lieu de perdre tout espoir. Les événements de mai ont démontré que le prolétariat reste toujours combatif et n'est pas prêt à se laisser faire impunément. Des moments durs et difficiles nous attendent bien entendu – mais ce serait du défaitisme pur [de] croire que tout est déjà perdu. L'avenir immédiat nous réserve encore des grandes surprises. Quand au Parti, il tient bien. Les journées du mai ont

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<sup>32</sup> Pagination of the file, assembling various letters and documents of the period, has been added by another hand. Probably the last one of the three consecutive institutions disheriting the Sneevliet personal archive after his execution in the Netherlands by German political police in 1942: after the discovery of the files evacuated by German intelligence near Wroclaw the documents were incorporated into the central archive of the Polish United Workers Party in Warsaw. In the 1950s the value of the papers for retracing personal networks of renegade internationalists was recognised by Communist party intelligence of the Soviet Union, leading to their transfer to their party archive in the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow, in whose counter-revolutionary successor institution RGASPI, Moscow they are now accessible for investigation under the signature: \_.

été une épreuve [à la]qu[elle]’il a résisté très bien. Non seulement nous assurons nos positions, malgré la campagne acharnée que l’on mène contre nous, mais elles sont encore peu solides.  
21<sup>33</sup> La réaction contre le stalinisme s’accroît de jour en jour. J’ai la conviction que ici ils vont se casser les dents.

La grande Tragédie de notre révolution ce sont les anarchistes. La masse est épa-tante: combative, héroïque, mais la direction hésite contentement et glisse de concession en concession. Attirer ces masses à nos positions est la tâche centrale du jour.

Le congrès du Parti aura lieu le 19 juin, et un mois après va s’ouvrir la conférence internationale. J’espère bien t’y voir. La revue Juillet , appelée à jouer un grand rôle pour le regroupement des forces révolutionnaires, est sous presse. J’espère qu’elle sera accueillie avec satisfaction par tous les révolutionnaires.

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<sup>33</sup> Change in pagination with same pencil as with previous footnote.

As-tu lu l'article de Crux? C'est révoltant. Le vieux s'avère chaque jour plus incapable de comprendre quoique ce soit à la révolution espagnole. D'ailleurs, il utilise les mêmes 3 22<sup>34</sup> procédés déloyaux, la déformation si chère aux stalinien. C'est du stalinisme (au)[à] rebours.

Amstel te renseignera en détail sur la situation. C'est un excellent camarade, dont nous regrettons le départ.

Excuse-moi la brièveté, mais [je] suis accablé de besoins. D'ailleurs, nous nous reverrons bientôt à Barcelone.

Cordialement,  
André'

8<sup>th</sup> June 1937    [page] 1            20

My dear Sneevliet, I benefit from the departure of the comrade Amstel to address some words to you.

Since your last voyage,<sup>35</sup> the situation changed considerably. Counter-revolution made significant progress, but it is not necessary to lose all hope. The events of May showed that the proletariat remains always combative

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<sup>34</sup> Same pencil interference as with previous footnote.

<sup>35</sup> October 1936, for a pointed characterization on the changes in the cityscape of revolutionary Barcelona compare George Orwell. Hommage to Cataluna. \_



and is not ready to let itself be **fooled** with impunity. Hard and difficult moments await us, well understood - but it would be pure defeatism to believe that all is already lost. The immediate future still holds for us great surprises. As to the Party<sup>36</sup>, it holds well. The days of May<sup>37</sup> were a challenge to which it resisted very well. We do not only ensure our positions, in spite of the **furious** campaign directed against us, but [these positions] are not very solid yet. [page] 21 The reaction against Stalinism increases day in day. I have the conviction that here they will break their teeth.

The great Tragedy of our revolution are the anarchists. The masses are impressive: combative, heroic, but the leadership hesitates self-satisfied and slips

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<sup>36</sup> POUM\_

<sup>37</sup> From 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> of May 1937, an effort by the official Spanish Republican government and its Soviet counselors focusing on political policing succeeded in pushing back some zones of Anarcho-Syndicalist and POUM control in the city of Barcelona. During several days and nights, the mobilization on both sides of a new front line dividing the revolutionary town neatly into two reached impressive dimensions, given that their common enemy, the British navy was patrolling the shore enforcing an effective arms embargo and the Fascist alliance, powered by German and Italian support, advanced on the town from the mountains of Aragon. What resulted in a draw on the streets was to serve as an excuse for a virtual putsch in the Republican government, halting the nationwide socialization strategy and opening the road to repressing the POUM 5 weeks later, falsifying its role in the event as a Trotskyist scapegoat, though Trotsky himself and the 4<sup>th</sup> International, though somewhat reluctantly, positioned themselves in opposition to POUM.

from one concession into another. To attract these masses to our positions is the central task of the day.

The congress of the Party will take place on 19 June,<sup>38</sup> and a month after will open the International Conference.<sup>39</sup> I

sincerely hope to see you there.

The review "Juillet"<sup>40</sup> is [currently] in print. It is to play a great role in regrouping revolutionary forces. I hope that it will be received with satisfaction [social] revolutionaries [of various orientation].

Did you read the Article<sup>41</sup> of Crux<sup>42</sup>? It is revolting.<sup>43</sup>  
The "vieux"<sup>44</sup> proves to be each day more unable to

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<sup>38</sup> The crack-down on POUM personal by Republican political police was timed 4 days before, on 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1937.

<sup>39</sup> Prepared and co-ordinated by Landau, from whom Sneevliet had received three conceptional papers in December 1936, one proposing a set-out of the POUM international journal "Juillet", compare the slightly out-dated account by Schlafranek, ignorant of archival evidence in Moscow and itself caught in conspiracy theories (with unfounded accusations against the Swiss internationalists Doppler).

<sup>40</sup> French for "July", slyly referring to both developments simultaneously, the Spanish Social Revolution of July 1937 and the French developments of July 1789.

<sup>41</sup> Trotsky published \_

<sup>42</sup> Latin for "raven", friendly pseudonym for Lev Davidovič Trocki (Trocki), common in circles with more or less critical vicinity to the 4<sup>th</sup> international \_

<sup>43</sup> After dismissing from the task of private secretary for Trocki, Nin's political maturation developed with increasing independence from his former mentor. After ceasing to correspond, the polemics

understand whatsoever about the Spanish revolution. By the way, he uses the same [page] 3 22 unloyal procedures, the deformation so much appreciated by the Stalinists. That is Stalinism the other way round.

Amstel will inform you in detail about the situation. He is an excellent comrade, and we regret his departure.

Excuse to me to be so brief, but I am stuffed with tasks. And, anyway, we will see each other soon in Barcelona.

Cordially,

Andrew

*RGASPI (Moscow) fond 522, opis 1- delo 114: list 20-22.*

1<sup>st</sup> - Open reflections on our first sample

1<sup>st</sup> - I Our minds anticipate the clubbing

In the class struggles of our times it doesn't need you too much exposure to grasp the tragedy of this last documented letter by André[s] Nin. A superficial experience of riot-police

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on theory and practice of the POUM and its anterior structures were voiced in publications. \_

<sup>44</sup> French for "old man", another friendly pseudonym frequently used for Trocki in the above mentioned circles. It was understood, that the catch-phrase "Trocki" which Stalinist counter-insurgency registered with special sensitivity was to be avoided wherever possible in personal correspondence. After the murder of Nin, the recipient of this letter took the precaution to correspond with Victor Serge under false names, a fact which causes considerable confusion in Moscow archival registers up to the present day.

coma-clubbing in the centre of London on Mayday makes it quite clear: the brutality of political police repression preys on your thoughts and most intimate feelings long before you feel the actual impact on your head, professionally aimed at sending you physically out of the undergoing fight. Nin was all but unacquainted with political repression. But he could not avoid of mentally becoming prey to it in his last days – who can?

Let us measure his preceding experience roughly. Before choosing Moscow as his second political basis in 1922, Nin had made prison in Germany fearing extradition to the dictatorship at home in Barcelona with the possibility of capital punishment. When the global fight for class hegemony ravaged his new political homeland in Moscow only half a decade later, he enjoyed three years of protection by his international fame as the first generation advocate of the Romanic and third world in the Red Trade Union International PROFINTERN. At a time, he could count himself with Victor Serge in Leningrad and Trotsky's first wife Bronstein as the only three openly oppositional communists who resisted intimidation in Soviet Europe. In those days, he had used his role quite similarly to the benefit of more vulnerable comrades as Henk Sneevlieth, the recipient of his last letter, was using his equally vanishing Dutch parliamentary immunity ten years later at the time of this probably last personal letter. Back in his highly policed Moscow isolation of the late 20s, Nin became a most vital correspondent for many oppositional social revolutionaries in exile and in forced Asian transportation. Later, when brotherly hostility between the two figures predestined to make a 4<sup>th</sup> international had taken

centre-stage already as in Nin's political article in Juillet mentioned in the letter, Trotsky admitted openly that the exchange of personal letters with Nin had become clearly the most important in his life by the quantity and quality it had developed. Against mounting police interference in communication, Nin sent to his comrade and friend in Alma Ata a costly set of reproductions of mural paintings by the Mexican comrade Diego Rivera, thus throwing the dices for Davidovich in whose house he was to outlive most of his comrades... and receive the final impact in the end. Not by chance, it was socially accepted in the immediate surrounding of Tony Blaire when crushing down labour in the "Labour party" to wear a little ice pick on gala dress as a sign of agile militancy in the ongoing war, class war as a matter of course. Thanks to Nin's extraordinary networking ability, winning Diego Rivera for the Communist opposition on his first and rather innocent visit to previously pacified Moscow in March 1928, Trotsky's forceful death had to be enacted as publicly as to leave us informed that he was killed with an ice pick. For some slightly worse making of political networking to safeguard Nin, the political police murder of André three years earlier in \_#a could be carried out more secretly. Only in 2008, the remnants of four victims could be dug out of the soil in the former Soviet police base in Republican Spain of whom one is probably André Nin. We still do not know what impact physically ended his political life. But we can perceive its antecedents in this letter with a somewhat horrible clarity.

So, we have the right to be disappointed, about his death as much as about its antecedent results, such as this letter. This letter is a tour de force, a bonfire of genuinely unjust indictments against his most intimate friends and allies in 30 years of political work: the syndicalist Anarchists of the Spanish Social Revolution on the one side and Lev Davidovich Trotzky on the other. At first glance, the only sober assessment by Nin is the dentist-type one. Nin rightly predicts an imminent future recession of the surrounding successes by Stalin-type machinations in Western European politics. Indeed, they lost their teeth on Nin, but what use is such development when they managed in the meantime to crush the very head that was able to abstract such supreme social knowledge from its own deathly plight? Yet, if we want to avoid the Christian mental highway of constructing just another martyr, we have to settle down to a much more patient reading, a reading doing justice to the standards of dialectical materialism, which our 7 protagonists were more eager to advance than to seek shelter for their personal survival.

Personally, I took 14 months for this reading up to now, changing my home from Asian Russia to Spain in the process, and still, I feel as if just only beginning the genuine quest. What are the possible consequences from such insight as we gain through letters like this? The absurd wish to save his life seems to poison the quality of a truly dialectical and materialist interpretation. Yet, life saving is a profession in revolutionary strive, the one of action medics. So, let us look how one of them reacted to Nin's fate simultaneously.

Sharing Nin's political assessments broadly, the progressive German doctor Hodann\_# choose to take immediate action. Already from the research account of Peter Weiss, we know the breath-taking proletarian quality of discussion among his patients who were coming in to his revolutionary hospital mutilated from their work on the Fascist front line. We now have access to genuine Soviet policing records, reporting their surveillance of his workplace and contacts to Moscow. Hodann was not a Republican to be inhibited by bourgeois taboos, to be sure. He had trained teams to promote masturbation in Republican trenches to finish up with the abominable phenomena of heterosexual prostitution on the Republican side. On seeing Nin and his friends disappearing, Hodann immediately contacted Norway to get several dozens of trusted medical specialist and himself out of Republican Spain and through Norwegian transit directly behind the closely related contemporary front-lines of the Chinese class war against Japanese invasion. The spy reports from Hodann's hospital basis have curiously enough landed in the personal files of Chinese volunteers in the Spanish international brigades, deposited in Moscow's Comintern collections. Trying hard, we can indeed slow down our patience in reading to the patience in action of Hodann and his fellows. To understand the experience of Nin's last days we might as a matter of fact need much more intellectual patience than is needed just for the translation of a revolutionary collective from Benares\_# via Oslo to China. To decelerate, let us try to understand first, why Hodann's communication to Oslo could be intercepted so fatally by Moscow, but Nin's last letter could not, though the POUM

apparatus was spiked with spies in those last days before the crack-down and the border control had long before been wrought out of the hands of POUM militia.

1<sup>st</sup>-II The postman “Amstel” and the recipient in “Amsterdam” “Comrade Amstel” is a pseudonym with a rich history in Dutch class conflict. The Dutch workers movement was indeed the only political collective worldwide able to effectuate something parallel to the split of Mencheviks and Bolshevis in the Russian Social Democracy before the outbreak of World War I. After 1911 and as a direct effect of the split in the youth movements, Andries Johannes Jacobus van Gool started to sign his political articles as Amstel, van Amstel and A[ndries] van Amstel. Against the broad current of revolutionary pacifists in the Dutch radical workers movement, the pseudonym “van Amstel” advocated violent and armed agency of the proletariat in the oncoming fight. The subsequent parallel yet utterly distinct developments in Petrograd and Barcelona of 1917 would strengthen his position immensely within the Dutch radical movement. Yet, Andries himself died 1917. Who then high-jacked his highly significant pseudonym when presenting him- or herself to André Nin as a part of the armed Dutch NAS-RASP contingent in the POUM militias against the strong NAS-fraction rejecting in the pre-1917 Dutch syndicalist tradition military aid for a class war which had to be won economically as agreed by activists of all fractions in the Dutch movement? We do not know yet. The taffeta-game of revolutionary pseudonyms itself is a most interesting sabotage against the commodified cult of revolutionary heros. For the time being we cannot



satisfy our policing interest socialized by the old society which made us, always – as Adorno noted – ready to identify with the authoritarian aggressor. We have to accept that the name “Amstel” leads us not to a historically policeable personality yet, but –maybe much more relevant- to a collective faculty and aquis communitaire of revolutionary discussion and strategy elaborated in the Dutch movement and made available for the Catalan capital when it finally took over the role of 1917 Petrograd in the history of Europe’s social revolution 1936. And who was the recipient, then? He was too much known to be able to use any pseudonym effectively, though he tried later in his correspondence with Victor Serge when both finally started fearing the immediate life-threat which had finished the political agency of his friend Nin in summer 1937. Sneevliet never ceased to be a modest trade union office worker. He had been expelled from the Dutch colony of Indonesia when taking the message of Petrograd 1917 literally among his local comrades. Already when being delegated to China he spent lengthy months of standstill with his personal mobility hampered and blocked by all sorts of European state. He was acutely black-listed by the British Imperial political police. In a rare inversion, he always thought of his role and political agency more modestly, than political police in East and West understood it to be. When questioned by US-american Trotskyists in the 1930s, he remarked on the impact of his participation in and experience in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Comintern congress in a genuinely Dutch understatement: “we worked with the anti-colonial thesis of Lenin and Roy”. Well, to put it mildly, it needed Henk Sneevlieth to put them together and into practice. In the

conference proceedings he has a prominent place parallel to Zinoviev on the question. But his actual networking input seems to be of quite a different scale, never needing words to classify his own importance. Well, Nin has some words for him, here. Actually, this is an invitation letter, explaining to Henk simultaneously the issues at stake, the personal risk in coming and the hilarious plan to be realized together on the first anniversary of the Spanish Revolution 19<sup>th</sup> of July 1937. Maybe this is why this last letter so damn hurts reading it today. It is not a farewell letter. It is but a fragile beginning. After the short summer of Anarchy in 1936, Nin genuinely expected to personally experience a summer of a genuine internationalist friendship with Henk and colleagues. For the first time after their joint early Comintern work, Henk and André were to combine their organizational faculties together in the environment of an ongoing Social Revolution in the making. Clearly, Nin expected nothing less than a new revolutionary International to arise from this convergence. By no means could he imagine that the job of renewing once more the spirit of the panEuropean workers' strive of the 1860s was to be accomplished in the following months so far from genuine revolution as the house of Diego Riviera in Mexico, which Nin had so wisely prepared for the later father figure of the 4<sup>th</sup> International over a decade. Of course there was petty rivalry at work in this global networking as well. Nin wanted to be assured of Sneevliet's loyalty to his Barcelona conversion for a POUM-inspired 4<sup>th</sup> international rather than having Sneevliet continue his de-facto-loyalty to the Trotsky inspired process. Exactly in the year when Nin gave up corresponding with Trotsky, 1933, Henk had actually

overcome most severe personal reserves he shared with Nin and to the contrary taken up correspondence with Trotsky again. While the Sydicalist Communist Nin fused two little oppositional workers parties to prove his independence from Trotsky, his Dutch Revolutionary Syndicalist counterpart Henk had actually merged two parties to link them to the initiative for a 4<sup>th</sup> international as epitomized by the figure of Trotsky and his multiple relations. All this making of the 4<sup>th</sup> international seems to have happened as a tragedy and is repeated until present day in endless farces. Join any demonstration on the British Isles nowadays and you can be sure to get a dozen of leaflets before meeting the state coma-clubbers: 3 types of "4<sup>th</sup> international" rival with a "5<sup>th</sup> international", there are various three and a half, as well as four and a half versions and the almost ever-lasting "movement for a construction of the 4<sup>th</sup>". To be frank, all this post shuffling in a fictitious 4<sup>th</sup> attempt to gain world hegemony of proletarian control and the shadow-boxing efforts at state-craft to supply the institutions with personal presumably needed for such a fabulous breakthrough, is rather more reminiscent of the petty academic puppet theatre we experience in our daily life than of genuine class conflict Henk and André experienced in theirs. So, can we seriously formulate the revolutionary distrust that people like Henk and André started this off back in the year of global back-lash in 1937? Superficially speaking, there are some similar elements present indeed. Henk and André were indeed involved in conflicts of increasing isolation from working class fights. What had once been political positions transformed into personalized rivalry under the pressure of material

conditions. But really, they were holding trench positions of working class hegemony at an immense personal cost, as their colleague of Zinoviev's upbringing, Antonio Gramsci had advocated, when the adversary succeeded in going over to mobile advancement warfare instead. Only 3 weeks after the power take-over in Petrograd, the predecessor in the costume of Amstel, Gool, had called Dutch workers to the offensive with the genuine Gramscian emphasis on subjective agency and cultural hegemony to be won and hold. Two decades later, Nin and Sneevliet had still the guts to hold on to this spontaneous adaption of Leninism for the Western hemisphere. Soon, they had to give way to the rising tide of a monstrous capitalist roll-back orchestrated at the rear of the fascist advance. So they are heroes after all. They never wanted to be, they wanted to live and continue their live-work but ignoring the shifts in material conditions has its personal limits. Both Henk and André were to die soon of the consequences.

So exploring the remnants of personal relationship in this age of unprecedented destruction to the benefit of the ruling class, we are reminded of the tidal seascape at the French coast around Mont St. Michele. Both Henk and André were acquainted with this phenomenon originating from to opposite proto-industrial poles to the massive French agricultural mainland, the homeland of Social revolution in the Western hemisphere: both Amsterdam and Barcelona had developed in close interaction with the French mainland, acting as their technically more advanced periphery. So, what had happened to the well-established medieval landscape

around St. Michele. Today's tourists are left but with a testimony of destruction. What had once been fields and functional footpaths, highways and settlements in the time before the great flood is now a virtual seascape, distorted but recognizable when temporarily exposed by a low tide. We are well-advised not to try to populate such remnants of former cultivation, because the tide is set to rise even further... but we can learn from the revolutionary Atlantis we have lost to better fortify unexpected advances in the future. Henk and André hold on to its construction to the very last moments. Yet, this letter is the testimony of a material failure. Following Ernesto Guevara, the revolutionary has to make the revolution happen, instead of dying for it.

So, have we finally discovered Nin's political testament after 70 years of hiding in Amsterdam, Wrocław, Warsaw and Moscow?

The answer is clear and of little interest: no, this is not the political testament we might have expected to read. The question, however, appears to be more helpful. What is a political testament? The social communication of a fighting collective reemerging with the movement, trying to pass on its knowledge and experience to comrades taking up their fight on another scale. The history of Class War is rich in such testaments. This letter is not one of them, its qualities are in other fields. To contextualise them accordingly, we now take a step back to look at the early soviet peer-group and its correlated, "entangled" development.

2<sup>nd</sup> sample: our Correspondence between Antonio and Tania Schucht(born Tatjana Schucht)<sup>45</sup>

The methodology of dialectical materialism is a permanently evolving task. It cannot be seen in categories of an achievement. When we think to have found the adequate formula for a social process, the mere dynamic of it has already shifted the realities our wordings will have to trace anew from then onwards. Our reflection is necessarily class-bound and therefore quite inadequate to grasp the dynamics of social processes if we do not submit it to the bonfire of contrasting and contradicting militant investigation. Therefore, it is precisely such quest for contrast and contradiction which has induced me to counter-pose the discovery of Nin's last letter to the letter by a close comrade of him, Antonio Gramsci. Unlike the communication by Nin, this letter by Gramsci has hit a readership heading towards a million almost 50 years ago already. As part of the sensible edition of the 1960s<sup>46</sup> it was soon acculturated by what shaped post-war Italy and was violently suppressed in contemporary Spain under the Franco-dictatorship: a labour based popular political culture ready to put in practice the formation of its organic intellectual in a mass contest for cultural hegemony. Thus, we have a stream of discussion contextualizing this letter with cultural and political practice over half a century. This allows us to highlight some parallels with the Nin document, keeping in mind the substantial

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<sup>45</sup> Tania Gramsci (born Tatjana Schucht)\_#5

<sup>46</sup> 60s letter edition

differences between the defeat 1926 in Italy and 1939 in Spain. Both, Gramsci and Nin were intentionally disabled for taking part in these defeats, shaping them directly, i.e. disabled to take part in revoking their implementation. However, we have to overcome the cheap scientistically trimmed revisionist bubble which haunted intellectual debate and production the 1990s. Both its findings as well as its modes of flattening social history to tabloid size betray their material working conditions. They send a late cold war army of looters out for presumably “free” poaching in archives compiled by the left civilization of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which were virtually open to more complex research long before. The result is a supremacy of right-wing cynics who have canonised their primitivist new-speak of autobiographical revenge against the sophistication of their parent’s generation in nothing but intellectual short-cuts. After 20 years of hit-and-run-techniques in historical research, we have approached a common sense of McDonald caricature of the official Communist party caricature of reductionist organizational history. That is how the archives are organized and as their right-wing looters have little time and lots of publicity, they had to work quickly.

So before we virtually take time out of this noise-making to dedicate our utterly insulted senses for contradiction and contrast to the document by Gramsci, it has to be made quite clear, that the political police measures against Gramsci and the Italian Labour movement can by no means be put into a relativist equation with the repression of Nin and the POUM. Yes, both were possible as a consequence of the European onslaught of Fascism which we will be able to grasp in its

making in our 4<sup>th</sup> sample. But similarities do not extend any further. It is a curious short cut to suggest, that Comintern action in 1937 can be reduced to a consistent command structure. There were enormous contradictions in material interest, personal agency, let alone political socialization of such different figures as Orlov and Antonov-Ovsenko acting in Spain. Much the more, this applied to the rank-and-file of the International brigades. It should be noted, that Gustav(o) Regler, who later associated with Victor Serge in Mexico against the daily life of Stalin-inspired street terror wrote up his personal account for the publishing project of Ernest Hemmingway still in a kind of lunatic loyalty to Moscow command, which was actually in sharp contradiction to his political agency and agenda in these days under the common shock of the absurdity of the Moscow trials. We should admit such an autonomy of subjectivity within each Russian and non-Russian subject of the military policing techniques they were expected to obey on their side of the front. In how far they obeyed and what made up their personal decisions materially should be subject to historical research in the future rather than to stereotype labeling techniques. As a matter of fact, the murder of Nin turned into a boomerang for the Soviet command and control interest in Republican Spain just as Nin was able to predict himself in advance. In the course of week, only a few falcons in the Soviet command apparatus could still defend the brutal pragmatism of killing the accused before the show-trial they had set up for him and his comrades. We have to acknowledge the terrible pragmatism of violence in the proletarian cultural hegemony developed under the Tsarist onslaught of the revolutionary



movement. Spitting out before such pragmatism is understandable but scientifically little productive. Equally, you would have to spit out in front of other phenomena it has brought to our limited minds: the first satellite in space e.g. If our spitting out is just limited to what bourgeois society has learnt to suppress under its rule it is nothing but class arrogance. There has been just too much rewriting of Republican Spain with unreflected bourgeois class arrogance already. There is instead a viable proletarian culture empowering us to reject Stalin-type pragmatism. And it is not by chance, that Gramsci has been able to formulate considerable elements making such an approach work in the historical sciences. When the 12-year-old Gramsci had to leave the pathetic Sardinian school for the poor to seek work, he got a definition of proletarian conditions, no reading of Marx could have conveyed to him in the first place. He was a handicapped child with spinal deformation due to occulted infantile bone tuberculosis. Nonetheless, he had to do 12-hours day-shift of hard physical labour.<sup>47</sup> It was during the nights, with his young deformed body reperculsing from the pain inflicted by his paternalist overseers at work, that he managed to escape into hours and hours of endless crying, most probably the basis for the chronical headaches haunting his adult life. "Serdce noit" is how Russian proletarian language describes this state of physical over-exploitation.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> As his predecessor of humble origin, Graccus Babeuf, Gramsci started working in property archives, yet his tasks were phisicall much more and intellectually much less demanding than for Babeuf.

<sup>48</sup> The author has found it in its written form in testimonies by Jewish settlers building the pioneer communes of the Far Eastern

And again, it is not by chance that Gramsci found the comrades of his life, Julia Schucht and her sisters Eugenia and (not an inmate) Tania, as a fellow inmate in a Soviet psychiatric hospital a decade before this letter was compiled. Julia was to become the mother of two of his children, but – mainly due to her psychological difficulties akin to Gramsci’s own clinical status - it was Tania Schucht who actually doubled her for the incredible task of accompanying him through the decade of torture in Fascist prison until his death. This death was well-premeditated. On starting his prison career, Gramsci made acquaintance with the firm conviction by the institution’s medical staff that they have the professional as agile Fascists duty to make him die, not to make him live. The military inquisitor appointed for Gramsci and mentioned in this letter was additionally disposing of an intimate knowledge of his Sardinian cultural background. In the days when Tania had to attend to the final effect of this prolonged Fascist labour of a decade she was patiently complaining about the swarms of agents and employees of the Fascist ministry of Interior affairs who would not leave the dying chamber in the catholic hospital and its surroundings. In this context it is a mere show of manipulative power, that the Vatican lately tried to restate its assumption that it succeeded in coaxing back the dying body of Gramsci into the Catholic church. This remake of an old legend has now been brought forward by the Vatican, characteristically accompanied by no presentation of

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Autonomous Jewish State Birobidzhan synchronical with the letter documented below.

evidence whatsoever. So the policing and symbolical subordination of the dying body of Gramsci continues in the form of farces in today's post-fascist Italy. There is no point in common between the individual excess of momentary violence in A\_## and the institutionally orchestrated torture to death over 12 years by a Fascist state build on the pride of thousands and thousands of bourgeois followers to be able to perform just this.

Yet, no matter how differently political police repression is constructed socially in both cases, our bodies and minds tend to receive the blows of isolation and forceful aggression on a basis of similar life-long experience.

Nin's and Gramsci's ways crossed several times. They were both active to revive the Italian syndicalist movement in the underground. When Nin travelled to Rome in early 1924\_, Gramsci was still holding the exile position of Vienna, delegated, just as Victor Serge in the years until 1926, to the Austrian capital by the trust put into them on the part of Zinoviev.

So with great care not to exploit personal subtleties for sweeping political generalizations, we can discern key notes in Nin's and Gramsci's letters which sound curiously alike. They both prove hilariously mature in grasping the agency of their political adversaries at the mere cutting edge of their respective dialectically materialist abilities. In the meantime, their subjectivity, insulted and spurred by the political police aggression mounted on them, starts to painstakingly over-react on the very opposite side: against the solidarity and

critical help of their closest comrades. In a proceeding letter, Gramsci actually suggested his wife Julia to divorce and search a better life. Now, he categorically demands a “yes” or a “no”. Under such circumstances, Tania Schucht takes to extreme precaution. For years, she will not communicate to Gramsci that “la mamma” evoked in this letter dies in the very same month. She presents this letter’s accusations for a due Soviet reaction only 7 years later, duly reporting the suggestion of Gramsci that he has been the victim of political repression through agency of both sides of the mortal barricade. With her brilliant sense for timing and aiming, which has saved Gramsci from his divorce plans and his childish retreat into “Sardignian” stereotype provincial complacency, Tania and her sisters used their modest means to through doubt into the very making of Stalin-dominated complacency in 1940. This letter by Gramsci of 5<sup>th</sup> December 1932 was attached to their letter and effected excessive contradictions shaking the whole direction of the comintern including Dimitrov and Togliatti. Yet, Tania was wise enough, never to indict Togliatti too clearly. In the repressive dreariness of Comintern work 1940, the intimate friend of Gramsci Togliatti was actually the only one who could guarantee that the heritage of Gramsci survived to inspire post-war proletarian struggles in Italy. The author of the “infamous letter”, \_## was understandably not the type any of the Schucht sisters wanted to replace for a Palmiro Togliatti in the remnants of Comintern work, though they would have probably been able to effect his removal from co-ordinating the forthcoming Italian struggles with the material they had in their hands ready to use from 1928 and especially

1932 onwards. In 1932 the exchange of Gramsci for Catholic Italian functionaries of the Mussolini-built Vatican state in Soviet custody failed. Why it failed is a very complex task to determine. Gramsci works hard on the question. As with all his political enemies, he is extremely clear-sighted with Comintern executives in this letter. It is only with Tania and Julia Schucht, that he becomes as blinded, conceited and self-preoccupied as we might expect of a prisoner under the treatment he gets. So here might be the common denominator with the Nin letter. Nin's contempt for fellow-Anarchists and his colleague in party machinery Trotsky seems to be of a similar making as the personalized injustice Gramsci is doing to Tania and Julia. If there is any foundation for such problematic analogy, you can now judge by yourself. In order to put the hermeneutics comparably, the transcription and translation process has been elaborated independently from the professional achievement by A\_## and his anglephone counterpart B\_##. It is nothing but a working document, a proof for systematic errors and deficiencies which have been effective to all the other 11 letters of this collection having attracted not slightly the interest and readership this one has.

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(see the historical photography, here as reproduction 201, with its usage traits in the Moscow Gramsci files and the facsimile of its backside, reproduction 202, transcribed

character by character<sup>49</sup> and translated into British English<sup>50</sup> in the caption)

(see reproduction 211, 212, 213 and 214 transcribed character by character<sup>51</sup> and translated into British English<sup>52</sup> underneath)

(see the rare photography, here as reproduction 201, with its usage traits in the Moscou Gramsci files and the facsimile of its backside, reproduction 299)<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> by the author , kindly proof-read by Gleb Albert, Cologne.

<sup>50</sup> by the author, kindly proof-read by Tossdorf\_, Mainz, and Bernhard H. Bayerlein, Mannheim.

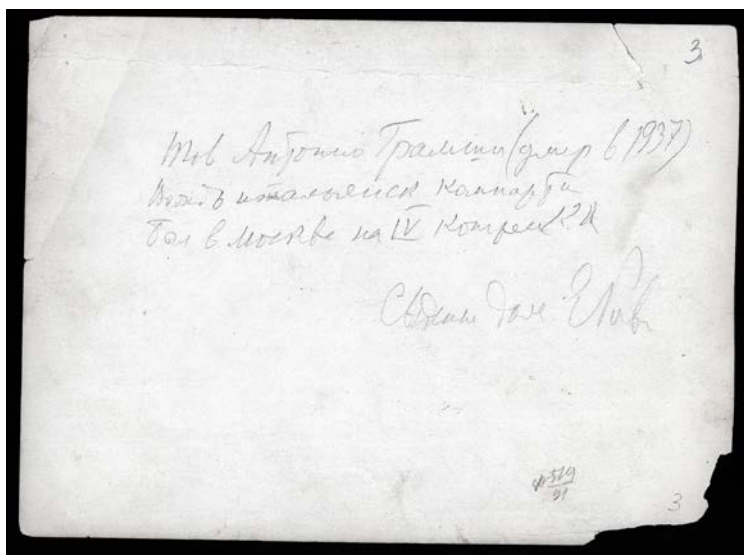
<sup>51</sup> by the author with the substantial help by Jil Silberstein\_, known as major editor of Victor Serge's works\_.

<sup>52</sup> by the author and kindly proof-read by Bernhard H. Bayerlein, Mannheim.

<sup>53</sup> The traditional and festive apparel of the photography reveals – in sharp contrast to German political prisoners of 1978 – that prison authorities surrendered control over the actual process of dying to the civil shere. This detail is hardly known among a wider public. Antonio Gramsci did not literally die in prison. The Fascist overseers of his mortal torture over more than a decade had the finesse for timing to transport him to his bourgeois background in Sardegna for the actual process of dying, once they could be sure that things would according to their plans medically irreversibly, without delay, and the amount of personal suffering was certain to make any political agency of their prisoner physically impossible, compare account of Tania Schucht in .



*Capture201: "Don't shade us the sun\_#31!" - the situationist collective of the 4<sup>th</sup> Comintern conference (\_#32), as in left theory over the two following decades the most inventive position is taken by the Sardinian Diogenes: Antonio Gramsci, as he was probably being complemented into a strange posture by the Russian professional photographer who might have been ill at ease with her or his composition facing the physical deformation of the Italian delegate by infantile bone tuberculosis, photo source: RGASPI (Moscow) fond 519, opis 1- delo 91: list\_#26 3ob.*



Capture202: the back side of the photo reads in Russian: "3/  
 Тов. Antonio Грамши (умер в 1937)/ Вождь итальянский  
 Компартии/ Был в Москве на IV Конгрессе К. I./С[н]ымк[а] тов.  
 [in latin characters:] Ercoli/ f[oto] 579/91" – [page]3/ Antonio  
 Gramsci (died in 1937)/ leader of the Italian Com[unist] party/  
 was in Moscow at the 4<sup>th</sup> congress of the C[ommunist]  
 I[n]ternational]/ photograph of com[rade] Ercoli[=Togliatti]/  
 photo [no.] 579/91, original archival photo Capture [written  
 after 1937] on the back side of reproduction 201; facsimile of  
 RGASPI (Moscow) fond 519, opis 1- delo 91: list 3.



Non si accettano  
pacchi con generi  
alimentari.



32

5 dicembre 1932

Carissima Tania,

Ho ricevuto la tua cartolina del 30 novembre e la lettera del 2.  
Mi dispiace molto che tu sia stata commulata e che ancora non ti sia  
rimessa. Ma perché non me ne hai accennato? Mi duole pensare che, non  
sapendo del tuo male, possa aver contribuito (come certamente è avvenuto) a  
renderti più nervosa e preoccupata, ad aggravare quindi il male stesso. Pensa  
che mi affermi la verità dicendo che stai più male; perciò ti scrivo cose  
così. In ogni modo devi proprio convincerti che nascondersi certi fatti è  
proprio che annunziarli subito; nascono dalle complicazioni che aumentano  
il dispiacere e lasciano una traccia permanente di dubbio angoscioso che  
altre cose siano ancora ignote e nuovi dispiaceri vengano sulla testa. - Cara  
Tania, ti prego con tutto il cuore di non voler discutere, ambigere, cercare  
di computare la mia lettera del 14 novembre. Mi sembrerebbe di essere  
vivisezionato come una cavia. Capisco benissimo che tu potresti rispondere  
ad ogni punto di essa, come quattro o quattro fa otto. Ma ti prego di credere  
che anch'io so le quattro operazioni e la tavola pitagorica. Non ti tratta  
quindi della maggiore o minore facilità a trovare delle controargomentazioni  
ai miei argomenti. Non ti tratta neppure di ciò che io abbia bisogno

Capture211: the most regular handwriting of the contemporary writing in the Prison Notebooks, yet conveying the most out-rageous crisis of isolation in his prison life so far, 1st page of our letter from Antonio Gramsci to Tania Schucht (cousin of Julia Gramsci), 5th December 1932; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 519, opis 1- delo 114: list 32.

di espressioni affettuose, di essere consolato, di essere accarezzato ecc. Queste cose sono belle e buone, ma nel caso specifico sono fuori luogo e appariscono (dovendo dirlo francamente) convenzionali come un complimento d'obbligo. Ho proprio paura di non entrare in discussione. Una cosa sola devi rispondermi: sei disposto a renderti tu interprete presso Giulia di ciò che ti ho scritto, o lo ritieni impossibile? Un sì o un no, ecco ciò che desidero. Ogni ritorno di discussione mi dispiacevole immensamente. Si tratta di un'operazione chirurgica, in un certo senso di una decapitazione; è giustificata solo a esiguità con un taglio netto, deciso; altrimenti diventerebbe un supplizio cinese. Avrei desiderato che tu mi avessi risposto subito; ma l'hai potuto fare. Pazienza. Ora però non devi girare il collo nella pancia. - Permetti che ti dica francamente una verità dolorosa. Spesso chi vuole consolare, essere affettuoso ecc., è in realtà il più feroce dei tormentatori. Anche nell'affetto bisogna essere soprattutto « intelligenti ». Era brava saremo nel 1933; una nuova fase della mia vita carceraria è già incominciata. Ebbene, bisogna che ti parli proprio francamente. Poiché io non molto raramente in dubbio il tuo affetto per me (è questa una premessa sempre presente al mio spirito, anche quando non si accenna e mi pare sia inutile accennarsi, come sarebbe ricordare sempre che la mamma o Giulia mi vogliono bene) e ormai penso che la mia lettera del 14 novembre rimarrà per ora senza conseguenze decisive, ti voglio dire che proprio il tuo atteggiamento deve mutarsi in alcuni punti. Credi che non voglio fare recriminazioni (che sembrano stolte), ma ti voglio far ricordare un episodio di qualche anno fa che forse hai dimenticato e al quale mi pare allora non hai risposto abbastanza per tirare norma di condotta.

Capture212: clearness of mind – catastrophe of another dimension, 2nd page of our letter from Antonio Gramsci to Tania Schucht, 5th December 1932; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 519, opis 1- delo 114: list 3206.

33

Ricordi che nel 1928, quando ero nel giudiziario di Milano, ricevetti una lettera di un amico, che era all'estero. Ricordi che ti parlai di questa lettera molto « strana » e ti riferii che il giudice istruttore, dopo avermela consegnata, aggiunse testualmente: « Onorevole Gramsci, lei ha degli amici che certamente desiderano che lei rimanga un pezzo in galera. Lei stessa mi riferì un altro giudizio dato su questa stessa lettera, quindi, più che culminava nell'aggettivo « criminale ». Ebbene, questa lettera era estremamente « affettuosa » verso di me, parve scritta per la sollecitudine empatica di « consolarmi », di incoraggiarmi ecc. Eppure su il giudizio del giudice istruttore che l'altro da te riferito, oggettivamente erano esatti. Dunque si può commettere un atto criminale volendo far del bene, dunque qualche duno volendosi far del bene può invece aver ribadito la tua catene? Pare di sì, a giudizio del giudice istruttore del Tribunale Militare territoriale di Milano, giudice che, come ti consta, ha coinciso con quello di un altro che era agli antipodi. E giustamente, perché, leggendomi alcuni brani della lettera, il giudice mi fece osservare che essa poteva essere/a parte il resto/finimmediatamente catastrofica per me e tale non era solo perché non si voleva coprire, perché si preferiva lasciar correre. Si tratta di un atto scellerato, o di una leggerezza irresponsabile? È difficile dirlo. Può darsi l'uno o l'altro caso insieme; può darsi che chi scrisse fosse solo irresponsabilmente stupido o qualche altro, meno stupido, lo abbia indotto a scrivere. Ma è inutile recuperare il capo su tali questioni. Rimane il fatto obiettivo che ha il suo significato. - Cara Tania, ti ho già detto che è incominciata una terza fase della mia vita di carcerato. La prima

Capture213: the only word inserted: {also} directly catastrophic, 3rd page of our letter from Antonio Gramsci to Tania Schucht, 5th December 1932; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 519, opis 1- delo 114: list 33.

Forse è andato dal mio arresto all'arrivo di quella lettera famigerata; fin  
a quel momento esistevano delle probabilità (certo, solo delle probabilità, ma cosa  
si può domandare di più!) a una svolta della vita diversa da quella che invece  
poi si verificò; quelle probabilità furono distrutte o furono ancora capite di peggio.  
La seconda fase va da quel momento ai primi del novembre scorso. Esistevano  
ancora delle possibilità (non più probabilità, solo possibilità, ma anche le possibi-  
lità non sono preziose e non bisogna cercare di ghermire!) e anche esse furono  
perdute, ti assicuro, non per colpa mia, ma perché non si volle dare ascolto  
a ciò che io avevo indicato a tempo opportuno. Tuisti lo dovei a barche e alla  
tua scioccaggine fatale (non mi riferisco al telegramma, che è una sciocchezza  
secondaria). Ma tu perché non sei venuto a buri nel 1952, come avevi promesso  
dai primi di gennaio? Se non avessi promesso e io non avessi conteso sulla  
promessa, ti avrei scritto di venire. Ti ho detto che non voglio recriminare. Voglio  
solo che il passato serva almeno di ammonestimento per questo terzo periodo,  
perché non si ripetano gli errori, le mancherologie del passato. Questa terza fase  
forse non si ripeterà gli errori, le mancherologie del passato. Questa terza fase  
forse non si ripeterà gli errori, le mancherologie del passato. Perché, ti pare,  
che ricominciare è la più dura e la più difficile da superare. Perciò, ti pare,  
non fare nulla senza il mio consenso, non ascoltare nessun consiglio che mi  
riguardi, fa solamente e « letteralmente » ciò che io ti potrei indicare. Questa con-  
vinzione ti ha voluto esordire con quella mia lunga lettera: che non basta  
ma le intenzioni buone e affettuose, ma che occorre molto altro prima di por-  
dere una decisione che non riguardi solo se stessi: occorre prima di tutto il  
consenso esplicito dell'interessato su cui ricadranno le conseguenze distinte che  
non sempre si sa prevedere. Ti abbraccio

Antonio

Capture214: a single double leaf, carried around  
comparatively little in its folded form (mind the usage traces  
centre to the right edge in contrast to the centre hole  
perceivable in reproduction 113), 4th page of our letter from

*Antonio Gramsci to Tania Schucht, 5th December 1932;  
facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 519, opis 1- delo 114: list  
33o6.*



*Capture299: on the bedcloth of the catholic hospital in which  
a “swarm of agents”(letter by Tania Schucht) from the Fascist  
Italian Ministry of Interior was busily following the course of  
events, in their eyes a most successful completion of their  
ministry’s top priority work during 11 years (until that day  
Gramsci was officially still Member of Italian Parliament, to be  
addressed as “Onorevole (honourful)”; photo source: RGASPI  
(Moscow) fond 519, opis 1- delo 91: list 12.*

2<sup>nd</sup> sample: our Correspondence between Antonio and Tania Gramsci (born Tatjana Schucht)

(see reproduction 211, 212, 213 and 214)

Transcription character by character from the original manuscript, *a letter from Antonio Gramsci to Tania Gramsci (Schucht), 5th December 1932; from the facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 519, opis 1- delo 114: list 32, 32ob, 33, 33ob.*

*This letter has been published in Italian in the 1960s with several serious spelling errors. Here an attempt at retranscribing critically.*

‘32 [paginazione del Archivio de Moscu\_]’<sup>54</sup>

[stampo] CASA PENALE SPECIALE TURI

[con una firma] ...A

[altro stampo] Non si accettano pacchi con generi alimentari<sup>55</sup>

5 dicembre 1932

Carissima Tania,

ho ricevuto la tua cartolina del 30 novembre e la lettera del 2.

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<sup>54</sup> RGASPI, Moscow, Fond 519 – Antonio Gramsci, Opis 1 - delo 114, page 32, 32ob, 33, 33ob.

<sup>55</sup> [from here onwards handwriting of Antonio Gramsci of the later prison period, a more neat and scholarly writing with the constant intention to pass prison censorship not provoking the accusation of intending to transmit occulted writing, as reidentifiable in the prison notebooks\_]



Mi dispiace molto che tu sia stata ammalata e che ancora non ti sia rimessa. Ma perché non me ne hai accennato? Mi duole pensare che, non sapendo del tuo male, possa aver contribuito (come certamente è avvenuto) a renderti più nervosa e preoccupata, ad aggravare quindi il male stesso. Penso che mi affermi la verità dicendo che stai già meglio, perciò ti scrivo certe cose. In ogni modo devi **pesprio** convincerti che nascondermi certi fatti è peggio che annunziarli subito; nascono delle complicazioni che aumentano il dispiacere e lasciano una traccia permanente di dubbio angosciosa che altre cose siano ancora ignote e nuovi dispiaceri incombano sulla testa. – Cara Tania, ti prego con tutto il cuore di non voler discutere, analizzare, cercare di compitare la mia lettera del 14 novembre. Mi sembrerebbe di essere vivisezionato come una cavia. Capisco benissimo che tu potresti rispondere ad ogni punto di essa “come quattro e quattro fa otto”. Ma ti prego di credere anch’io so le quattro operazioni de la tavola pitagorica. Non si tratta quindi delle maggiore o minore facilità a trovare delle controargomentazioni ai miei argomenti. Non si tratta neppure di ciò che io abbia bisogno [list 32ob] di espressioni affettuose, di essere consolato, di essere accarezzato [incoraggiato?] ecc. Queste cose sono belle e buone, ma nel caso specifico sono fuori luogo e apparirei vero (devo dirlo francamente) convenzionali come un complimento d’obbligo. Ti prego perciò di non entrare in discussione.<sup>56</sup> Una cosa sola devi rispondermi: sei disposta a renderti tu interprete presso Giulia di ciò che ti ho scritto, o lo ritessi impossibile? Un sì o un no, ecco ciò che desidero. Ogni contor-  
torno di discussione mi dispiacerebbe immensamente. Si tratta di un’operazione chirurgica, in un certo senso di una decapitazione, è giustificata solo se eseguita con un taglio netto, deciso; altrimenti diventerebbe un **supplizio cinese**.<sup>57</sup> Avrei desiderato che tu mi avessi risposto subito; non l’hai potuto fare. Pazienza. Ora però non devi girare il coltello nella piaga. – Permetti che ti dica francamente una verità dolorosa. Spesso chi vuole consolare, essere affettuoso ecc. è in realtà il più feroce dei tormentatori. Anche nell’ “affetto” bisogna essere

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<sup>56</sup> [Shostility]

<sup>57</sup> [bomb the Headquarters Mao\_].

soprattutto “intelligenti”. Era breve saremo nel 1933; una nuova fase della mia vita carceraria è già incominciata. Ebbene, bisogna che ti parli proprio francamente. Poiché io non metto neanche in dubbio il tuo affetto per me (è questa una premessa sempre presente al mio spirito, anche quando non vi accenno e mi pare si inutile accennarlo, come sarebbe ricordare sempre che la mamma o Giulia mi vogliono bene) e ormai penso che la mia lettera del 14 novembre rimarrà per ora senza conseguenze decisive, ti voglio dire che proprio il tuo atteggiamento deve mutare in alcune punti. Credi che non voglio fare recriminazioni (che sarebbero **stolte** #34), ma ti voglio per ricordare un episodio di qualche anni fa che forse hai dimenticato e al quale mi pare allora non hai riflettuto abbastanza per trarne norma di condotta. [list 33] Ricordi che nel 1928, quando ero nel giudiziario di Milano, ricevetti una lettera di un “amico” che era all’estero.<sup>58</sup> Ricordi che ti parlai di questa lettera molto “strana” e ti riferii che il giudice istruttore, dopo avermela consegnata, aggiunse testualmente: “Onorevole Gramsci, lei ha degli amici che certamente desiderano che lei rimanga un pezzo in galera<sup>59</sup>”. Tu stessa mi riferisti un altro giudizio dato su questa stessa lettera, giudizio che culminava nell’oggettivo “criminale”. Ebbene, questa lettera era estremamente “affettuosa” verso di me, pareva scritta per la sollecitudine impaziente di “consolarmi”, di incoraggiarmi ecc. Eppure sia il giudizio del giudice istruttore che l’altro da te riferito, oggettivamente erano esatti. Dunque si può commettere un atto criminale volendo far del bene, dunque **qualc(he-d)uno** volendo te far del bene può invece aver ribadito le tue catene? Pare di sì, a giudizio del giudice istruttore del Tribunale Militare Territoriale di Milano, giudizio che, come ti constò, ha coinciso con quello di un altro che era agli antipodi. E giustamente, perché, leggendomi alcuni brani della lettera, il giudice mi fece osservanze che essa poteva essere (a parte il resto) anche immediatamente catastrofica per me e tale non era solo perché non si voleva infierire, perché si preferiva lasciar correre. Si trattò di un atto scellerato o di una leggerezza irresponsa-

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<sup>58</sup> Tosca from his Paris exile, at that time identified as a Trockist renegade,

<sup>59</sup> pezzo in galera, colloquial expression, not inkeeping with the address.



bile? È difficile dirlo. Può darsi l'uno e l'altro caso insieme, può darsi che chi scrisse fosse solo irresponsabilmente stupido e qualche altro, meno stupido, lo abbia indotto a scrivere. Ma è inutile rompersi il capo su tali questioni. Rima-  
ne il fatto obbiettivo che ha il suo significati. – Cara Tania, ti ho già detto che è incominciata una terza fase della mia vita di carcerato. La prima  
[list] 33

fase è andata dal mio arresto all'arrivo di quella lettera famigerata; fin a quel momento esistevano delle probabilità (certo, solo delle probabilità, ma cosa si può domandare di più?) a una svolta della vita diversa da quella che invece **fese** si verificò; quelle probabilità furono distrutte e poteva ancora capitare di peggio. La seconda fase va da quel momento ai primi del novembre scorso.<sup>60</sup> Esistevano ancora delle possibilità (non più possibilità, solo possibilità, ma anche le possibilità non sono preziose e non bisogna cercare di ghermirle?) e anche esse furono perdute, te assicuro, non per colpa mia, ma perché non si volle dare ascolto a ciò che io avevo indicato a tempo opportuno. Questo lo devo a Carlo e alla sua **scepmiaggine fatua** (non mi riferisco al telegramma, che è una **sciocchezza** secondaria). Ma tu perché non sei venuta a Turi nel 1932, come avei promesso dai primi di gennaio? Se non avessi promesso e io non avessi contato sulla promessa, te avrei scritto di venire. Ti ho detto che non voglio recriminare. Voglio solo che il passato serva almeno di ammaestramento per questo terzo periodo, perché non si ripetano gli errori, le **manchevolezze** del passato. Questa terza fase che incomincia è la più dura e la più difficile da superare. Perciò, ti prego, non fare nulla senza il mio consenso, non ascoltare nessun consiglio che mi riguardi, fa solamente e "letteralmente" ciò che io ti potrà indicare. Questa convinzione ti ho voluto **inridere** con questa mia lunga tiritera: che non bastano le intenzioni buone e affettuose, ma che occorre molto altro prima di prendere una decisione che non riguardi solo se stessi: occorre prima di tutto il consenso esplicito dell'interessato su cui ricadranno le conseguenze disastrose che non sempre si sa prevedere. Ti abbraccio  
Antonio'

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<sup>60</sup> 1st of November 1932

32 [Moscow archive pagination]

[Stamp] SPECIAL PENAL HOUSE OF TURI [with signature:] ...A

[different stamp] packages with alimentary contents are not accepted

5 Decembers 1932

Dearest Tania,

I have received your postcard of 30<sup>th</sup> November and the letter of the 2<sup>nd</sup>. I resent a lot that you have been become ill and that you have not recovered yet. But why did you not indicate it to me? It hurts to me to think that, not knowing of your suffering, it can have contributed (that is surely what has happened) so I made you more nervous and worried, aggravating therefore your suffering. I think, I am making up the truth, believing that you are already better now.

Nevertheless, I will write down some things. In any case you must convince yourself that to hide certain facts to me it is worse than to announce them quickly; otherwise they give birth to complications which increase the displeasure leaving a permanent trace of distressing doubt that other things are still unknown and breed new displeasures on the head. -

Tania Beloved, I urge you with all my heart not to try to discuss, to analyse, to try to take apart my letter of 14<sup>th</sup>

November. I would feel like a guinea-pig under vivisection otherwise. I understand perfectly that you could answer to every point of it "because four and four equals eight". I pray you but to believe me that I as well am acquainted with the four operations of the Pythagorean table. This is not about superior or inferior faculties to find counter-arguments to my arguments. It is not even the case that I needed [reverse page 32] expressions of affection, being consoled, being encouraged etc These things are beautiful and good, but in this specific case they are out of place and would really appear (I must say it frankly) conventional as a due compliment. I urge you therefore not to enter in discussion. You have to answer me only one thing: are you able to make yourself an interpreter of what I wrote you about for Julia or do you reckon it impossible? A yes or a no, that is what I desire. I would dislike immensely every contour of a discussion.<sup>61</sup> This is a chirurgical operation, in a certain sense a decaptation, and it is justified only if executed with a clear cut, a well-decided cut; otherwise this would turn into a Chinese torture.<sup>62</sup> I would have wished that you had answered to me quickly; you have not been able it to do that. Patience. But now, you do not have to turn the knife in the wound [lit. In the plague]. - Allow me to frankly tell you a painful truth. Often the one who wants to console, be

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<sup>61</sup> Evidently this has a preceding history of bad experience, but the sense of prescribing or limiting the counterpart's possible reaction is imminent in these lines, betraying a nervousness bordering to hostility.

<sup>62</sup> [

bomb the Headquarters Mao\_].

affectionate etc is in reality the most violent tormentor.<sup>63</sup> Also in “affection” it is necessary to be above all “intelligent”. In a little, we will be in the year 1933; a new phase of my prison life has already begun. Well, it is necessary that I speak to you just frankly. Since I do not put in doubt your affection for me (this is a premise which is always present in my mind, also when I do not point out expressively to you and it seems to me so useless to point out it, as it would be to always remember that “la mamma”<sup>64</sup> or Julia wants me well) and by now I think that my letter of 14th November will remain for the time being without decisive consequences, I want to say to you that your own attitude must change in some points. Believe me that I do not want to indict you (that they would be stupid), but you I want to remind you an episode of some

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<sup>63</sup> This warning is clearly lacking a sense of objective measurement. Being submitted to the torture of a fascist isolation cell, it is unjust to symbolically empower his wife and his close comrades to do greater harm to him. In the following accusations against the former comrade Tosca it becomes evident, that subjectively, the prison confinement does not allow Gramsci to differentiate any more between friendly and enemy attacks on his personal integrity. As subjectivity is his only accessible measure in forced isolation, it acquires the force of objective relations. It seems a supreme achievement that Gramsci is able to voice this humiliating shift in relations with respect to his counter-part. The reason why we do not encounter this faculty in the prison letters by Rosa Luxemburg might be due to the higher degree of possible occulted and uncensored communication in Prussian martial arrest 1915-1918 as compared to the Italian fascist prison regime 1926-1938.

<sup>64</sup> Italian for “the mother”, the Italian concept of “la mamma” in a marriage (the mother of the husband, evidently) seems rather unheard of within the horizon of Tania’s Russian socialisation as well as in Anglo-Saxon linguistic possibilities.

years ago that perhaps you have forgotten and which as it appears to me now you have not reflected enough to derive from it a norm of conduct.

[page] 33

Remember that in 1928, when I was in the judicial prison of Milan, I received a letter of a “friend” who was abroad.<sup>65</sup> Remember that I spoke about this very “strange” letter and I reported to you that the investigating magistrate, after having it delivered to me, added literary: “Dear Member of parliament Gramsci, you have friends who surely wish that it remains a[nother] bit in gaol”. You yourself have given me another judgement on this same letter, a judgement which culminated [in the assertion to see] a “criminal” objective. Well, this letter was extremely “affectionate” towards of me, it seemed written for the impatient desire “to console me”, to encourage etc. Nevertheless, neither the judgement of the investigating magistrate nor the other one you mentioned were exact in an objective sense. Thus, if you can commit a criminal act wanting to do something good, therefore anyone who wants to do something good can instead have contributed to forge your chains even tighter? This seems to be the case, in the judgement of the investigating magistrate of the Territorial Military Court of Milan, a judgement that, as I told you, coincided with that one of another one who was at

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65 Tosca from his exile Paris, at that renegade Time identified as to Trockist,

the antipode.<sup>66</sup> And just, because, reading to me some pieces of the letter, the judge expressed the observation that this could be (in part of the rest) also immediately catastrophic for me and such was not only because I did not want to act cruelly [exposing Tosca, the author of this letter], preferring to let the case run by itself. Was it an aimful action or just [the result] of some irresponsible light[-hearted]ness? It is difficult to say. Maybe both is true, maybe that the one who wrote was only irresponsibly stupid and someone else, less stupid, has induced him to write. But it is futile to break your head on such issues. The objective fact remains the same and it has its own meaning. - Tania Beloved, I have already said you that a third phase of my life as a prisoner has begun. The first [reverse page 33] phase was from my arrest to the arrival of that ill-famed letter; until that moment existed probabilities (surely, only probabilities, but what else can you demand?) to a change in life different from what in fact

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<sup>66</sup> With this summary of a 4 years' development, Gramsci seems to go beyond just refuting the Stalinist conspiracy theories against the "Trotskyist" renegade Tosca. His stylistic choice to write out for the first time the lengthy name of the fascist institution involved, though it had been mentioned before, indicates that a certain emphasis can be ascribed to this sentence. On a very factual level, Gramsci diagnoses in 1932 a conversion of Fascist and Stalinist agency, which the leftist bourgeois feullitonist Kurt Tucholsky registered only in 1935 from his Swedish exile "They sit at one table and negotiate – we have to start all over anew [leaving aside the communist party which involved itself in such dealing]". Only parallel to the Moscow processes, as late as 1937, such partial conversion enters into official Soviet talk when Litvinov took to praising the popular qualities of the Spanish fascist movement in his speech to the League of Nations.

became the truth; those probabilities were destroyed and it could still have happened worse. The second phase goes from that moment to first of past November.<sup>67</sup> There did exist still possibilities (not more than possibilities, solo possibilities, but also the possibilities are not precious and it is not necessary to try to **germinate**\_#27 them?) and they as well were lost, I assure you, not because of my fault, but because it was not wanted to grant attention to this that I had indicated when time was ripe.<sup>68</sup> This I owe to Carl and to his **scempiaggine fatua**\_#28 (I do not refer to the telegram, that it is a secondary **sciocchezza**\_#29). But you, why did you not come to Turi in the 1932, as you had promised from first days of January? If you had not promised and I had not counted on the promise, I would have written to you to come. I have said to you that I do not want to indict. I only want that the past serves at least as a training for this third period, so that the errors are not repeated, **the lack of will**\_#30 of the past. This third phase that has begun is the hardest and most difficult to support. Therefore, I urge you, not to make anything without my consent, not to listen to any council in regard to me, do only and “literally” this that I will be able to indicate to you. This conviction is what I wanted to I have to you intentional **to infunnel** into you with this long funnel of mine: that it is not enough to have good and affectionate intentions, but

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<sup>67</sup> 1st of November 1932

<sup>68</sup> Probably referring to the possibility to exchange him for a prisoner of the high Italian aristocracy in Soviet custody. His wife understands this as an indictment to the highest levels of Bolshevik party power, in the 1940s she chooses to direct a complaint past Togliatti and Dimitrov to Stalin, adjoining this letter.

that a lot else is necessary before taking a decision that does not only concern you: first of all it is necessary to have the explicit consent of the interested one on which the disastrous consequences [could] fall back that one does not always know to preview. I embrace to you

Antony

*RGASPI (Moscow) fond 519, opis 1- delo 114: list 32, 32ob, 33, 33ob.*

3<sup>rd</sup> sample: our Correspondence between Victor Serge and Henk Sneevliet

Victor Serge felt strongly for Antonio Gramsci in prison. They did not only share an entangled Russian and Austrian exile militancy but also a rich knowledge of romantic revolutionary faculties unimpressed by Marxian systematisation. The unjust imprisonment of Gramsci's father and the extraordinarily severe French indictment against the young Victor Serge had similar effects. They explored the self-organisation of latin labour unrest 1917 with Serge like Nin in Barcelona and Gramsci in Turino with a similarly unorthodox interest and personal militancy. So when hitting the road and subsequently Soviet Russia in the early 1920, all of them including Sneevliet and Michalec had sufficient empirical knowledge of workers' autonomy not to be impressed to easily by the make-believe of the former Tsarist middle-class socialisation gaining majority position in the Communist party



after the massive influx of early 1924, ironically enough, spurred by the death of Lenin. Lenin had been able to conjure an unparalleled support of working-class struggle and radicalism in bourgeois mainstream. By 1905 it had become part of the good tone in middle and upper class household to foster some stakes and actions in radical Social and increasingly Bolshevik militancy. The figure of Lenin and his eclectic theoretical work was not so much needed by the Russian proletariat as by the subdued progressive bourgeois discussion under Tsarist rule. This is why, e.g. his theory on imperialism met, such broad success when he decided to adapt a genuinely bourgeois thinking from progressive British discussions to suit Russian ends. Not only Rosa Luxemburg developed much more autonomy in the task of developing a proletarian anti-colonial theory and strategy. The Indian Marxist Roy and his Indonesian comrade Sneevlieth were in a practical and theoretical sense much closer to class contradictions spurred by the colonial order of the World than Lenin. It was, however, the indisputable faculty and merit of Lenin to be able to co-opt and instrumentalise such supreme experience and reflection. So this is how Comrade Vova introduced the protagonist of 3 of our letter samples, Henk Sneevlieth to the assembly of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Comintern Congress\_##.

In the end Lenin's thesis were deconstructed minutely by Henk in the plenary session while Roy's thesis passed unchanged and with due respect expressed equally by Vova and Henk heeding to Roy's supreme knowledge of the British colonial hegemony. Out of this short scene of 1920 we can see clearly what Bolshevik openness of discussion meant to

Social world revolutionaries while the Red Army was advancing the last kilometres towards liberating Warsaw. As a matter of fact, we see, that Henk publicly (i.e. inside the party) criticising and correcting to the most minute detail the wording of Lenin, he was expressing his respect and attention to the importance of this wording. The fact that Roy's theses passed unabridged can rather be understood as a more superficial and less genuine form of reverence for the guest from India. Again, the new hegemony setting in on party proceedings after 1923, was not as far-fetched as Serge suggests in his desperate exclamation in letter\_## of this 3<sup>rd</sup> sample. Democracy for Bolshevik practice was always a matter of inner-party democracy. Outside, the party was fighting with a talent for combativity and shock warfare, which had made it emerge strongest from the 50 years of muffled virtual civil war under Tsarist repression. The methods of the post-Lenin period in party life were nothing original or new. Their novelty consisted in the mere inversion of ends and means: what was the treatment of adversaries outside the party, Tsarist political police officers, uncooperative entrepreneurs, Imperial army commanders, was now for the first time used for expressing a gradually increasing level of inner-party aggressiveness. The dialectical nature of this shift is reflected in Victor Serge's highly dialectical assessments of public property relations and political possibilities in a party after Stalin's fall he understands in April 1936, the month in which Gramsci dies, as barely inevitable. Such reflection is in sharp contrast to the virtually pro European Union, anti-communist streamlining Gorkin administers over the memory of Serge qualifying

himself clamorously as “the last one who shook his hand”<sup>69</sup> before Serge died alone in a night-taxi, not able to say his name to the driver. The fame of Serge is of a slightly dubious making. As within Gramsci’s family, psychiatric hospitalisation of people having to bear the consequences of his male militancy was the price he payed for his frontline trespassing. The last letter in this sample was actually written parallel to his Russian wife of 1919, \_##, finally entering closed psychiatric treatment for an illness which had developed in their virtual home arrest 1928-1933 in Leningrad (with a G.P.U. agent living next door in the communal flat) and his subsequent transportation to Orenburg until their deportation of 18<sup>th</sup> \_##

April 1936. It is at this point that the old friendship with Henk which developed 16 years earlier in the immediate proximity of Zinovev and the setting-up of the Comintern takes center stage again... at least for Henk. As in almost all personal relations Victor sustains, there is a curious imbalance: Serge has the power to move on, always and he uses this power, moving from French anarchism to Catalan Syndicalism to libertarian Communism and slowly to the rather sterile anti-communism of his last years in exile. The fact that Serge dyed without comrades nearby, making his way forward in an US-american style taxi is somehow enigmatic. In the thick correspondence of which this sample retraces only a small slice, Sneevlieth implores Serge, not to go to Paris. Sneevlieth wants to have Serge close by, in Briuxelles, better still in

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<sup>69</sup> The text of 1957, curiously ignorant of the 20th Party Congress in Moscow, is available on [www.\\_##](http://www._##)

Amsterdam. As Serge cannot possibly earn his bread by redacting the Dutch periodicals Sneevlieth directs, Henk invents the job of a caricaturist for him. Serge declines the offer. In view of the proceeding illness of his wife Henk suggests to have the mother of his two sons, bereaft by their subsequent suicides, to take care for Serge's baby daughter J\_##. Serge declines the offer. Henk argues convincingly, that the Paris street-fights with Soviet agents are not a very promising place for surviving the forthcoming conflicts with the party. Besides attacking unorthodox Communism openly on the streets of the metropolis, they stage fabulous assaults, such as the robbery of documentation in the *librairie du Travail\_##* mentioned as a central resource for reference in the correspondence underneath\_##. Serge declines the suggestion by Henk. He has an agenda of his own. As soon as his wife is surrendered to psychiatric institutional confinement, he decides for Paris living in a new heterosexual relationship with \_## which is to replace the role of his Russian comrade of two decades and mother to his two children with a curious swiftness. He does not care to mention such changes to Sneevliet in the correspondence of these dramatic days, though Henk is very frank about the sterility of his own relation to the mother of his two children respectively. Serge does not reciprocate Henk's choice of intimacy. He hurries away. He declines and opens new construction sites, trying to tear Henk behind to New York, to the Paris committee work against the Moscow trials. While Henk Sneevlieth chooses underground work and builds up armed resistance against all three warring parties of the war: the German invaders as well as British and French

imperialism. But his Marx-Lenin-Luxemburg-front, a truly defeatist armed resistance organisation mobilises as well against the military interest of the Soviet Union. This was not without significance in the little known military underground of the occupied Netherlands, where about 2000 communist party<sup>70</sup> militants were killed by German political police action. Most of them, because the Dutch bourgeois intelligence did not care to hide or destroy its surveillance files of the communist movement and to the contrary continued to collaborate congenially with the new administration, just as it had co-operated with GESTAPO demands in the years leading up to the invasion of the Netherlands. Serge chooses the road out of the pan-European armed resistance movement just as e.g. Lion Feuchtwanger. Both leave behind their partners and children back in Europe for a critical period of several weeks. Feuchtwanger, however, is cursed by insiders as a follower of Stalin with bourgeois naivety little short of outright cynism, Serge leaves his wife and his daughter behind when departing from Marseille. There is no point in constructing something like a moral failure out of this priority choice in an extreme

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<sup>70</sup> In Dutch historiography, the Communist party of the Netherlands is the first Communist party of the world, founded almost a decade before its Russian follower. Somewhat heeding to such perspective of regionalist patriotism (essentially as antihistoric as the Guinness book of records) the first tentative searches for foreign support by the Bolshevik fraction in Russian Social-Democracy almost immediately after taking over power were directed towards the Dutch party. This might be regarded as a kind of embryonic form of the Communist International founded later. This for the time being speculative observation is the fruit of a discussion to which Gleb Albert has contributed a major input of up to now unpublished archival evidence.

situation of threat. Just for too long, the memory of Serge has been fashioned as an academic contest for intellect-worship. This sample can serve to appreciate both, the hilarious working of a mind undmuffled by conventions, labels and taboos as well as the underlying making of such faculties in gender biases, externalisation of psychological draw-backs and the cultivation of unequal exchange in most intimate friendship. Serge faught many conflicts throughout his life, in the end, he remained a European bourgeois. And what a genuine excitement to be able to read another sequence of texts now, testifying about the proletarian intelligence he managed to assimilate on his ever-restless life-path.

(see reproduction 311, 321, 331, 332, 341, 342, 351, 352, 361 and 362 transcribed character by character<sup>71</sup> and translated into British English<sup>72</sup> underneath)

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<sup>71</sup> by the author, kindly proof-read by Bernhard H. Bayerlein, Mannheim.

<sup>72</sup> by the author, kindly proof-read by Bernhard H. Bayerlein, Mannheim.

Amsterdam, 29 janvier 1937

30

Cher camarade Victor,

Premièrement l'adresse laquelle tu as demandé. C'est :

Alice Mahuys  
chez Querido  
Keizersgracht 333  
Amsterdam.

Deuxièmement: Ton article "Assez de sang" était trop tard pour notre journal de cette semaine. Mais il était tellement bon et impressionnant que nous avons destiné la traduction pour un petit pamphlet du parti, lequel sera vendu en quelques jours. Au même temps une copie de cette traduction est envoyée aux organisations ouvrières et politiques d'Amsterdam, auxquelles nous avons proposé une grande meeting contre le procès. Naturellement les Staliniens étaient exclus de cette possibilité. Le lâche Winkoop a utilisé deux meetings de son parti, organisés pour le mémoire de Lénine pour se solidariser totalement avec Staline et pour exiger la mort des 17 accusés même avant le bandit Vichinski est venu avec sa réquisitoire.

Troisièmement je t'écris à ce moment dans des conditions très tristes pour moi. Mardi passé à sept heures du soir le seul fils qui n'est resté, quittait la maison de sa mère à Amsterdam et il n'est pas retourné jusqu'à ce moment. Tu comprends bien la situation. Il a 25 ans; les derniers cinq ans il a vécu avec sa mère en souffrant chaque jour de nouveau la perte de l'autre, qui nous quittait le 4 mars 1932. Nous avons hélas la grande crainte d'un malheur terrible. Je n'ose pas voir dans le futur prochain. Peut-être tu me verras un des prochains jours. J'ai besoin de quelques amis pour trouver de la force et je n'en ai pas beaucoup qui peuvent faire ça.

Avec mes salutations

Mon travail est interrompé. Il me semble à peu près un crime de continuer la vie normale.

Capture311: a blueprint for the sender's archive, 1st and only page of our letter from Henk Sneevliet to Victor Serge, 29th January 1937; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1-delov 199: list 30.

Amsterdam, 4 Février 1937

29

Victor Serge  
Rue Joseph Bess, 134  
Uccle  
Bruxelles.

Cher camarade Serge,

Hier Bob Spanjer me disait que tu n'avais pas encore reçu l'adresse exacte de Querido. Probablement nos lettres se croisaient. En tout cas je répète encore une fois l'adresse, demandée par toi:

Alice Nahuy  
chez Querido  
Keizergracht 333  
Amsterdam.

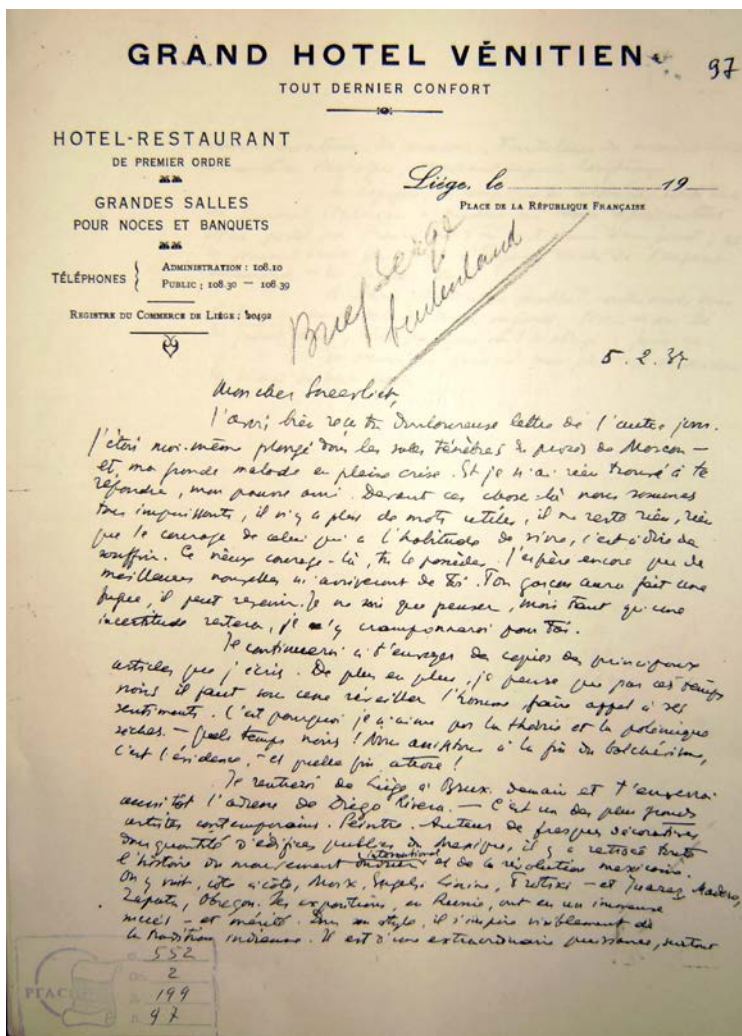
Neville m'écrit de Paris qu'on attend la première brochure du vieux en quelques jours. Est-ce que tu as écrit déjà au vieux? Est-ce que tu pourrais me donner son adresse personnelle? Je l'ai besoin. Au même temps tu pourrais me donner une information demandée par un camarade de la Haye sur le peintre mexicain Diego Rivera et son œuvre? Est-ce que tu as écrit encore des articles pour la presse française? Donne moi les copies. Tes articles ont une grande valeur pour notre travail ici. Ils possèdent cette qualité humaine laquelle on cherche en vain chez les politiciens purs.

J'insiste à une réponse immédiate. Je pense encore sur la possibilité de te visiter. Même une conversation de quelques heures pourrait avoir une grande signification personnelle pour moi. Est-ce que tu as reçu ma lettre du 29 janvier dans laquelle je te communiquais la disparition de mon fils de 25 ans? Jusqu'aujourd'hui aucune nouvelle! C'est bien désespérant.

Avec mes salutations

Capture321: anxious not to miss out on his task of supplying Victor Serge with a publishing opportunity, 2nd page of our letter from Henk Sneevliet to Victor Serge, 4feb1937; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 199: list 29.





Capture331: Victor Serge politicising in a Liège Grand Hotel, while his wife remained in Brussels with the two children, one of them only several months old, within a month it turns out that she was slowly approaching a psychological state qualifying for hospitalisation under the constant pressure

following Victor's Leningrad arrest and release after 6 weeks in 1928, 1st page of our letter from Victor Serge to Henk Sneevliet, 5th February 1937; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 199: list 97.

comme créateur de masses. Fondées sur un mouvement  
 communiste révolutionnaire, opposant depuis longtemps.  
 Le Drapeau, le compagnon de colonnes continue.  
 Le journal Staline a publié un dessin représentant  
 Nini porté par Franco qui s'en sert comme d'un jouet, et  
 le journal écrit que Nini a tué les Reich de l'argent  
 allemand - de Hitler. Voilà.  
 A Paris, Sadiou a publié cette note, dans  
 l'Humanité un article de Lasser, injurieux. Nous avons été  
 de grands amis, mais pourquoi est-il obligé de faire ça.  
 Tu verras ce jour-ci mon fils. Je te fera  
 le mail de tout cœur  
 V.S.

Capture332: Mexican wallpainting as a means of "creating masses" – Serge was visibly at the ends of his wits while his former 16 colleagues in Moscow prepared for a death sentence, 2nd page of our letter from Victor Serge to Henk Sneevliet, 5th February 1937; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 199: list 97ob.

Amsterdam, 25 Februari 1937

95

Cher camarade Serge,

Nous avons publié ton article sur Ordjonikidze dans le journal du parti de cette semaine. Quelques pages de ton livre "Destin d'une révolution" sont traduites pour notre revue mensuelle. Je te remercie beaucoup pour l'envoi du livre et j'espère que tu aies quelques résultats avec tes efforts d'arranger une traduction hollandaise. Est-ce que la négociation avec Querido se développe dans un sens favorable? Dans le cas il refuse je veux correspondre avec les éditeurs Byleveld à Utrecht et van Loosbeek et Slaterus à Arnhem. Il me semble que ces deux maisons sont intéressées dans la publication. Le livre a une grande valeur comme source d'information sur la Russie actuelle. Dans nos réunions où je parle sur les procès de Moscou, le contenu de ton livre me rend de grands services.

La Librairie du Travail à Paris ne t'envoyait pas encore la brochure d'Ivon. Dans une lettre du jeune Sédoff il y a quelques remarques sur cette brochure, et au même temps sur la brochure de Masloff-Ruth Fischer. Au même temps le dernier numéro d'Unser Wort contient une attaque acerbe sur Masloff, qui est accusé de contribuer des articles pour quelques journaux à Paris dont "Tageszeitung" serait subsidiée par Münzenberg. Je ne peux pas juger la valeur des accusations, mais j'ai encore une fois la crainte que les jeunes gens du centre s'amusent avec la satisfaction de leur petite passion, laquelle se dirigeait déjà longtemps vers une rupture définitive avec Masloff.

Notre jeune camarade van Bristelen à Barcelone me donne ses impressions dans un rapport pour le comité central et dans une petite lettre avec des perspectives assez sombres. Il parle d'une situation dangereuse pour le P.O.U.M. Est-ce que tu as appris quelque chose des opinions du vieux sur l'attitude du centre dans l'affaire espagnole? Je reçois "Socialist Appeal" de l'Amérique, dans lequel Shachtman et ses amis de l'ancien Workersparty développent leurs opinions sur l'Espagne et le P.O.U.M. Parce que probablement Shachtman a des relations immédiates avec le vieux je dois accepter la point de vue que Shachtman, qui se prononce pour un parti vraiment révolutionnaire en Espagne, s'exprime conformément les idées du vieux. Combien de temps fait-il attendre encore pour recevoir des informations sur ce problème de la plus grande importance?

Nous avons l'intention de traduire l'article de Georges Fioch sur ton cas. Pourrais-tu me donner quelques particularités sur l'auteur? Quel est le journal et le date du journal dans lequel l'article était publié? J'ai besoin de ces informations en trois jours (lundi prochain). C'était bien fait de ta part d'écrire sur l'activité terroriste de Stalin-Ordjonikidze. Naturellement les staliniens hollandais n'ont pas hésité de publier l'article de Sadoul dans la "Tribune". Tu vois que la publication de ton travail pour Crapouillot continue dans notre journal du parti. La semaine prochaine le chapitre "N.E.P. et l'Opposition" sera traduit. Il ya une question pour moi est-ce que tu n'approches pas trop la ligne générale en montrant que la première période l'économie soviétique n'était qu'une suite de l'économie de la guerre mondiale (communisme de guerre)? Est-ce que les forces révolutionnaires des Soviets n'ont pas voulu ces forces d'économie pour réaliser leurs désirs socialistes? Je me rappelle le "Wit" des vieux bolchéviques parlant avec Trotski dit: "Het gelykheid is niet mogelijk". Dans cette phrase construite sur le nom Lenin le N.E.P. était une note laquelle était d'un caractère réactionnaire en comparaison avec l'économie socialiste de la première période. Si je me rappelle bien c'était le droitier Boukharine qui a contribué beaucoup à la construction de l'idée "socialisme de guerre" lequel devait être corrigé par le N.E.P. dans la période de consolidation. Ce point me semble assez important, comme il me semble nécessaire de discuter entre les "Trotskistes": est-ce que la fin de toute sagesse marxiste de maintenir la nécessité de la défense de l'U.R.S.S. et de maintenir la point de vue que l'U.R.S.S. serait une société sur des bases socialistes?

Capture341: drowning the sense of loss in a flood of organisational pettinesses, 1st page of our letter from Henk Sneevliet to Victor Serge, 25th February 1937; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 199: list 95.

On pourrait continuer avec les indications de quelques problèmes existants et dont l'influence se montre dans chaque effort d'unifier les éléments révolutionnaires au dehors la deuxième et la troisième. Il faut prévenir la règle du dogme. Il faut de souplesse dans les formules. Dans ce temps d'une grande désorientation du mouvement ouvrier un peu d'opportunisme révolutionnaire me semble utile. On avait trop de cet opportunisme dans le deuxième congrès du Komintern, et spécialement dans la brochure de Lenin sur les maladies infantiles.

Est-ce que tu as des relations avec le groupe de Ferrat? Il m'envoie régulièrement ses publications, et en lisant j'ai reçu l'impression que ce groupe a de grandes difficultés avec le procès de rupture avec le Stalinième. On ne voit pas un développement sûr. Ces gens là hésitent et ils répètent la faute d'Orliot sur un autre plan en perdant du temps pour le développement révolutionnaire d'un parti indépendant. Cette hésitation était funeste pour Orliot lui-même. Si tu as des possibilités pour influencer ces gens ne néglige pas cette chance.

Pas de nouvelles jusqu'ici sur mon fils. C'est maintenant la cinquième semaine en nous ne savons plus dans quelle direction nous pourrions trouver la solution de ce drame.

Avec mes salutations fraternelles,

*Capture342: the alert office professional Sneevliet usually carefully separated the original typoscrits of his letters from its blueprints before signing, 2nd page of our letter from Henk Sneevliet to Victor Serge, 25th February 1937; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 199: list 96.*



135  
26 II 37  
135

Recapituland

Mon cher ami,

Je n'ai pas de nouvelles de Guerido, bien que j'aie envoyé le livre en plusieurs parts sans en paraître adreçé.

Quant à moi, je ne vois aucun inconvénient à ce que Maslov profite d'une feuille française par son conseil. Statistiquement, dira ce qu'il faut et ce qu'il faut. Comme toi, je crois que le secteur le plus idéal continue à faire des ravages. C'est tout fini.

J'ai vu récemment Gorkin et je serais à son sujet un certain peu vent de la bon. La situation est difficile, mais le POUK serait en pleine croissance et tout très bon. Perspectives obscures. Les possibilités d'une victoire immédiate restent les plus faibles. G. comprend un public anarchiste en réponse aux provoc. staliniennes. Malaga a été perdu par trahison. X y avait peut-être (et il y a peut-être encore) l'arrière-pensée de provoquer une situation très critique pour imposer l'état de siège à l'arrière. L'attitude de l'URSS est obscure et perfide. La Grèce n'aurait pas été le Catalane, même payée, il y a longtemps.

J'attends des journaux maxims pour m'informer sur les idées qu'il y a. Il y a eu d'excellentes indications pour le grand public. Shechtman s'en tient au point de vue stalinien comme le Bulletin pour le 10<sup>e</sup> qui a encore publié des thèses à qu'il ne servent à rien.

G. Ploch est un violent pacifiste anarchisant, militant depuis une trentaine d'années. Poète et journaliste. Internationaliste-pacifiste pendant la guerre. Bonnet homme.

Sur le communisme de guerre, je suis de ton avis et j'ai écrit dans l'Œuvre, p. 438-441. Si vous faites une brochure de De la guerre à l'insurrection ou peut-être mettre en note les données un passage de ce livre.

Tenart m'a fait une bonne impression. Ses deux amis, le tonnelier et ce qu'il ne peuvent aller nulle part dans l'état de scission des de l'Union ou maintenant. 4 ou 5 pages, s'en va de son et se consacrant en France, qui très ensemble ne feraient pas encore un vrai parti; et de question de personnalité jointe à la question. Ronges secondaires, empêchant entre eux tout rapprochement. C'est irrespirable.

Capture351: the flamboyant mind of Serge had no problems in adapting a squared sheet for his purposes, catch-words for working tasks of his recipient are underlined to facilitate him recapitulating if he has fulfilled them at a later glance, 1st page of our letter from Victor Serge to Henk Sneevliet, 26th Febuary 1937; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1-del0 199: list 135.

Je crois que nous devons maintenant sur la position  
 de ceux de l'URSS nous 1<sup>re</sup> nous identifier à l'URSS nous le  
 régime Staline, - 2<sup>e</sup> nous en conclure à l'union soviétique des  
 pays alliés de l'URSS. La bureaucratie Staline nous actuelle  
 défend tout de même la propriété collective des moyens de  
 production, base d'une révolution vers le socialisme par la  
 lutte de classe à reprendre.  
 Tout à fait de ton avis sur la nécessité d'une  
 "opportuniste réindustrialisation". Le dogme étouffe et tue. La  
 classe je t'en prie plus longuement boudé.  
 Il me semble que la manque de nouvelles de ton fils  
 est plutôt rassurant. On ne disparaît pas au Hollandais sans les  
 de base. X ont été parés. Ne serait-il pas en Esp?

Avec affection V.S.

C'est fait me vases à 75. D'autre, les répondront aussi.

Capture352: Like Nin, Serge loved to end letters just in the middle of the last page, the greeting formula is identical with Andres Nin's choice for Sneevliet 10 weeks later, 2nd page of our letter from Victor Serge to Henk Sneevliet, 26th February 1937; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 199: list 135ob.

6 Avril 37

Brunelmont 137 133

Mon cher ami,

Voici deux petits articles. — Je ne t'ai  
plus écrit depuis la mort de Pau, car j'ai  
rien à te dire: on se sent muet, impuissant et  
inutile devant la mort et la douleur d'autrui.  
Et il peut venir de là une lassitude sans  
bornes à laquelle il ne faut rien céder...

Je pars samedi à Paris. Voici ma  
nouvelle adresse pour les journaux et le  
courrier:

8 rue César Franck, 8

Paris 15

Dès que j'aurai un logement, j'écrirai,  
espérant bien te voir très peu. A Paris,  
je travaillerais avec le POU et la Commission  
d'Enquête sur les procès de Moscou. Beaucoup  
plus utilement.

Qu'en penses-tu de la Commission d'Enquête.  
Connais-tu notre Comité de Paris? Je pense  
qu'il faut lui donner un caractère inter-  
national et je te demande d'en faire  
partie. Nous te l'endrons en courant de tous  
nos vœux. Il est formé de

J. Galtier, Boissière, André Philippo, Maig,  
Martinet, Willems, Mago. Paz, Rolmar,  
Victor Serpo, André Limbour, Georges  
Proch, André Breton, et p.p. autres. Nous  
allons nous efforcer de soutenir la  
Commission d'Enquête de New York et



Capture361: actually a farewell letter, Serge disregards all proposals and advices and moves to Paris, 15<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, 1st page of our letter from Victor Serge to Henk Sneevliet, 6th April 1937; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 199: list 133.

134  
135

peut. être courager quelqu'un à N.Y.  
- C'est une action nécessaire.

Ce qui se passe en Russie, ce  
qui continue à se passer est indiscutable.  
Mes deux articles te mettent au courant.  
Staline achève un coup d'Etat mais se  
trouve dans une impasse et n'a jamais été  
lui-même, plus en péril qu'aujourd'hui.  
Tout peut arriver demain, tout.

Je te serre fortement la  
main, VICTOR SERGE

Capture362: "Everything can happen tomorrow, everything" – a rare consistency in materialist thinking, while actively opposing the Moscow trials, 2nd page of our letter from Victor Serge to Henk Sneevliet, 6th April 1937; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 199: list 134.



six letters exchanged between *Victor Serge and Henk Sneevliet*, from 29th January to 6th April 1937; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 199: 1<sup>st</sup> letter: list 30, 2<sup>nd</sup> letter: 29, 3<sup>rd</sup> letter list 97 and 97ob, 4<sup>th</sup> letter: list 95 and 96, 5<sup>th</sup> letter: list 135 and 135ob, 6<sup>th</sup> letter list 133 and 134.

Transcription character by character from the original manuscripts, six letters exchanged between *Victor Serge and Henk Sneevliet*, from 29th January to 6th April 1937; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 199: [1<sup>st</sup> letter:] list 30, [2<sup>nd</sup> letter:] 29, [3<sup>rd</sup> letter] list 97 and 97ob, [4<sup>th</sup> letter:] list 95 and 96, [5<sup>th</sup> letter:] list 135 and 135ob, [6<sup>th</sup> letter] list 133 and 134.

'1

Amsterdam, 29 janvier 1937 1 30  
[list] 30

Cher camarade Victor,

Premièrement l'adresse laquelle tu as demandé. C'est  
Alice Nahuys  
Chez Querido  
Keizersgracht 333  
Amsterdam.

Deuxièmement : Ton article "Assez de sang" était trop tard pour notre journal de cette semaine. Mais il était tellement bon et impressionnant que nous avons destiné la traduction pour un petit pamphlet du parti, lequel sera vendu en quelques jours. Au même temps une copie de cette traduction est envoyée aux organisations ouvrières et politiques d'Amsterdam, auxquelles nous avons proposé une grande meeting contre le procès. Naturellement les Staliniens étaient exclues de cette possibilité. Le lâche Wynkoop a utilisé deux

meetings de son parti, organisé pour le mémoire de Lénin pour se solidariser totalement avec Stalin et pour exiger la mort des 17 accusés même avant le bandit Vichinski est venu avec sa réquisitoire.

Troisièmement je t'écris à ce moment dans des conditions très tristes pour moi. Mardi passé à sept heures du soir le seul fils qui m'est resté, quittait la maison de sa mère à Amsterdam et il n'est pas retourné jusqu'à ce moment. Tu comprends bien la situation. Il a 25 ans ; les derniers cinq ans il a vécu avec sa mère souffrant chaque jour de nouveau la perte de l'autre<sup>73</sup>, qui nous quittait le 4 mars 1932. Nous avons hélas la grande crainte d'un malheur terrible. Je n'ose pas voir dans le futur prochain. Peut-être tu me verras un des prochains jours. J'ai besoin de quelques amis pour trouver de la force et je n'en ai pas beaucoup qui peuvent faire ça.

Avec mes salutations

Mon travail est interromp[u]<é>. Il me semble à peu près un crime de continuer la vie normale.

[list 29, chronologically inversed with list 30]

Amsterdam, 4 Fevrier 1937

[list] 29

Victor Serge  
Rue Joseph Bens, 134  
Uocle  
Bruxelles.

Cher camarade Serge,

Hier Beb Spanjer me disait que tu n'avais pas encore reçu l'adresse exacte de Querido. Probablement nos lettres se croisaient.<sup>74</sup> En tout cas je répète encore une fois l'adresse, demandée par toi :

---

<sup>73</sup> Sneeveliet calls the other son "le déserteur" in a letter to Rosmers, referring to his suicide.

<sup>74</sup> To be precise, the letter of Sneeveliet and the oral communication transmitted by Beb Spanjer have coincided.

Alice Nahuys  
Chez Querido  
Keizersgracht 333  
Amsterdam.

Naville<sup>75</sup> m'écrit de Paris qu'on s'attend à la première brochure du vieux en quelques jours. Est-ce que tu as déjà écrit au vieux ? Est-ce que tu pourrais me donner son adresse personnelle ? Je l'ai besoin. Au même temps tu pourrais me donner une information demandée par un camarade de la Haye sur le peintre mexicain Diego Rivera et son œuvre ? Est-ce que tu as écrit encore des articles pour la presse française ? Donne moi les copies. Tes articles ont une grande valeur pour notre travail ici. Ils possèdent cette qualité humaine laquelle on cherche en vain chez les politiciens purs. J'insiste à une réponse immédiate. Je pense encore sur la possibilité de te [rendre] visite<r>. Même une conversation de quelques heures pourrait avoir une grande signification pour moi. Est-ce que tu as reçu ma lettre du 29. Janvier dans laquelle je te communique<c>[qu]ai la disparition de mon fils de 25 ans ? Jusqu'aujourd'hui aucune nouvelle ! C'est bien d<e>[é]sespérant.

Avec mes salutations

Serge à Sneevliet  
GRAND HOTEL VÉNITIEN  
TOUT DERNIER CONFORT  
HOTEL-RESTAURANT  
DE PREMIER ORDRE  
GRANDES SALLES  
POUR NOCES ET BANQUETS  
TÉLÉPHONES  
ADMINISTRATION :108.10  
PUBLIC :108.30 – 108.39  
REGISTRE DU COMMERCE DE LIÈGE : 20492  
Liège, le .....19.....  
PLACE DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

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<sup>75</sup> Close collaborator of Trotsky, whom Sneevliet curses for his lack of devotion in the following months.

Brief Serge  
Buitenland

4 5.2.37

Mon cher Sneevliet,

J'avais bien reçu ta chaleureuse lettre de l'autre jour.<sup>76</sup>  
J'étais moi-même plongé dans les sales Ténèbres du procès de Moscou – et ma pende malade en pleine crise. Et je n'ai rien trouvé à te répondre, mon pauvre ami. Devant ces choses-là nous sommes très impuissants, il n'y a plein de mots utiles, il ne reste rien, rien que le courage de celui qui a l'habitude de vivre, c'est-à-dire de souffrir. Ce vieux courage-là, tu le possèdes. J'espère encore que de meilleures nouvelles m'arrivent de toi. Ton garçon aura fait une f[o]ug[é]e, il peut revenir. Je ne sais que penser, mais tant qu'une incertitude restera, je n'y cramponnerai pour toi.

Je continuera à t'envoyer des copies des principaux articles que j'écris. De plus en plus, je pense que pour ces temps noirs il faut sans cesse réveiller l'homme, faire appel à ses sentiments. C'est pourquoi je n'aime pas la théorie et la polémique sèches. –Quels temps noirs ! Nous assistons à la fin du bolchévisme, c'est l'évidence, - et quelle fin atroce !

Je rentreras de Liège à Brux.[elles] demain et t'enverrai aussitôt l'adresse [ ? ] de Diego Rivera. – C'est un des plus grands artistes contemporains. Peintre. Auteur de fresques décoratives dans [une] quantité d'édifices publiques du Mexique, il y a retracé toute l'histoire du mouvement ouvrier {international} et de la révolution mexicaine. On y voit, côte à côte, Marx, Engels, Lénine, Trotski-et Juarez Madero, Zapata, Obregon. Les expositions, en Russie, ont eu un immense succès – et mérité. Dans son style, il s'inspire visiblement de la position [ ? ] indienne. Il est d'une extraordinaire puissance, surtout comme créateur de masses. Fondateur du mouvement comm{uniste} au Mexique, opposant depuis longtemps.

En Espagne, la campagne de calomnies continue.  
Un journal Stalinién a publié un dessin représentant

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<sup>76</sup> It is not quite clear whether Serge refers to the letter of 29th January or of just the day before, 4th February 1937. His response obviously takes heed to the later letter as well.

Nin porté par Franco qui s'en sert comme d'un jouet ;  
et ce journal écrit que Nin a toujours touché de l'argent  
allemand – de Hitler. Voilà.

A Paris, Sa(...)[doul] a publié contre moi, dans  
l'Huma<sup>77</sup> un article de basses injures. Nous avons été  
de grand[s] amis, voilà pourquoi on l'a obligé à faire ça.

Tu verra ces jours-ci mon fils. – Je te serre  
la main de tout cœur

V.S.

[list 95]

Amsterdam, 25 Februari 1937

Buitenland [list] 95

Cher camarade Serge,

Nous avons publié ton article sur Ordjonikidze dans le journal du parti  
de cette semaine. Quelque pages de ton livre « Destin d'une révolution » sont  
traduites pour notre revue mensuelle. Je te remercie beaucoup pour l'envoi  
du livre et j'espère que tu aies quelques résultats avec tes efforts d'arran-  
ger une traduction hollandaise. Est-ce que la négociation avec Querido se  
développe dans un sens favorable? Dans le cas il refuse je veux correspondre  
avec les éditeurs Byleveld a Utrecht et van Lochem et Slaterus a Arnhem.  
Il me semble ces deux maisons sont intéressées dans la publication. Le  
livre a une grande valeur comme source d'information sur la Russie actuelle.  
Dans nos réunions ou je parle sur les procès de Moscou, le contenu de ton  
livre me rend de grands services.

La Librairie du Travail a Paris me n'envoyait pas encore la brochure  
d'Yvon. Dans une lettre du jeune Sédoff il y a quelques remarques sur cette  
brochure, et au même temps sur la brochure de Masloff-Ruth Fischer. Au même  
temps le dernier numéro d'Unser Wort contient une attaque amère sur Masloff,  
qui est accusé de contribuer des articles pour quelques journaux a Paris  
dont « Tageszeitung » serait subsidiée par Münzenberg. Je ne peux pas juger  
la valeur des accusations, mais j'ai encore une fois la crainte que les  
jeunes gène du centre<sup>78</sup> s'amuse avec la satisfaction de leur petite passion,  
laquelle se dir<e>[i]geait déjà longtemps vers une rupture définitive avec Masloff.

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<sup>77</sup> L'Humanité, daily paper of the French Communist Party

<sup>78</sup> Centre de Paris pour constituer la Quatrième Internationale

Notre jeune camarade van Driesten a Barcelone me donne ses impressions dans un rapport pour le comité central <et> dans une petite lettre avec des perspectives assez sombres. Il parle d'une situation dangereuse pour le P.O.U.M. Est-ce-que tu as appris quelques choses des opinions du vieux sur l'attitude du centre dans l'affaire espagnole? Je reçois « Socialist Appeal » de l'Amérique, dans lequel Shachtmann\_ et ses amis de l'ancien Workersparty développent leurs opinions sur l'Espagne et le P.O.U.M. Parce que probablement Shachtmann a des relations immédiates avec le vieux je dois accepter la point de vue que Shachtman, qui se prononce pour un parti vraiment révolutionnaire[e] en Espagne, s'exprime conformément les idées du vieux. Combien de temps faut-il attendre encore pour recevoir des informations sur ce problème de la plus grande importance ?

Nous avons l'intention de traduire l'article de Georges Pioch\_ sur ton cas, Pourrais-tu me donner quelques particularités sur l'auteur? Quel est le journal et le date du journal dans lequel l'article était publié? J'ai besoin de ces informations en trois jours (lundi prochain). C'était bien fait de ta part d'écrire sur l'activité terroriste de Stalin-Ordjonikidze. Naturellement les staliniens hollandais n'ont pas hésité à publier l'article de Sadoul dans la « Tribune ». Tu vois que la publication de ton travail pour Crapouillot\_ continue dans notre journal du parti. La semaine prochaine le chapitre "H.E.P. et l'Opposition" sera traduit. Il y[']a une question pour moi est-ce-que tu n'approche pas trop la ligne générale en montrant que la première période l'économie soviétique n'était qu'une suite de l'économie de la guerre mondiale (communisme de guerre)? Est-ce-que les forces révolutionnaires des Soviets n'ont pas voulu ces formes d'économie pour réaliser leurs désirs socialistes ? Je me rappelle le "Witz" des vieux bolcheviques lequel m'était raconté par Joffe à Pékin\_. Tu connais ça probablement. Lenin parlant avec Trotzki dit : Ljef esli nelzja idiom nazad. Dans cette phrase construite sur le nom de Lenin le N.E.P était une acte laquelle était d'un caractère réactionnaire[e] en compar[a]ison avec l'économie socialiste de la première période. Si je me rappelle bien c'était le droitier Boukharine qui a contribué beaucoup à la construction de l'idée "socialisme de guerre" lequel devait être corrigé par le N.E.P. dans la période de consolidation. Ce point me semble assez important, comme il me semble nécessaire de discuter entre les « Trotskistes » : est-ce-que la fin de toute sagesse marxiste de maintenir la nécessité de la défense de l'U.R.S.S. et de maintenir la point de vue que l'U.R.S.S. serait une société sur des bases socialistes?

-2- 96

On pourrait continuer avec les indications de –quelques problèmes existants et dont l'influence se montre dans chaque effort d'unifier les éléments révolutionnaires au dehors de la deuxième et la troisième [Internationale]. Il faut prévenir

la règne du dogme. Il faut de souplesse dans les formules. Dans ce temps d'une grande d<e>[é]sorientation du mouvement ouvrier un peu d'opportunisme r<e>[é]volutionnaire me semble utile. On avait trop de cet opportunisme dans le deuxième congrès du Komintern,<sup>79</sup> et spécialement dans la brochure de Lenin sur les maladies <e>[i]nfantiles.

Est-ce-que tu as des relations avec le groupe de Ferrat\_? Il m'envoie régulièrement ses publications, et en lisant j'ai reçu l'impression que ce groupe a de grandes difficultés avec le procès de rupture avec le Stalinisme. On ne voit pas un développement sûr. Ces gens là hésitent et ils répètent la faute de Doriot\_ sur un autre plan en perdant du temps pour le développement révolutionnaire d'un parti indépendant. Cette hésitation était funeste pour Doriot lui-même. Si tu as des possibilités pour influencer ces gens ne néglige pas cette chance.

Pas ce nouvelles jusqu'ici sur mon fils. C'est maintenant la cinquième semaine en [laquelle] nous ne savons plus dans quelle direction nous pourrions trouver la solution de ce drame.

Avec mes salutations fraternelles,  
[without signature]

[list 135]

buitenland

~~156~~

26 II 37

[list] 135

Mon cher ami,

Je n'ai pas de nouvelles de Querido, bien que j'ai envoyé le livre en épreuves pris sous sa forme achevée.

Quant à moi, je ne verrai aucun encensement [ ?\_ ] à ce que Maslov

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<sup>79</sup> Having received his revolutionary socialization in the Indonesian Dutch colonies, Sneevliet worked with Lenin and Roy's thesis on an anti-colonial strategy

profite d'une feuille financée par une canaille stalinienne<sup>80</sup> pour y dire ce qu'il pense et ce qu'il sait. Comme Toi, je crois que le sectarisme le plus idiot continue à faire des ravages. Ce n'est pas fini.

J'ai vu récemment Gorkin et je verrai ce soir un copain qui entre de là-bas.<sup>81</sup> La situation est difficile, mais le POUM serait en pleine croissance et tient très bien. Perspectives obscures. Les possibilités d'une victoire ouvrière restent les plus grandes. G.[orkin] croisait un putsch anarchiste en réponse aux provoc.[ations] stalinienne. Malaga a été perdue pour trahison. Il y avait peut-être (et il y a p.[eut]-être encore) l'arrière-pensée de provoquer une situation très critique pour imposer l'état de siège à l'arrière. L'attitude de l'URSS est obscure et perfide. Les armes n'arrivent pas à la Catalogne, même payées il y a longtemps.

J'attends des journaux mexicains qui m'informent sur ses idées<sup>82</sup> quand à l'Esp.[agne]. Il y a eu d'excellentes déclarations pour le grand public.<sup>83</sup> Shachtman s'en tient au point de vue sectaire comme le Bulletin pour le IV<sup>e</sup> qui a encore publiée des thèses lesquelles ne servent à rien.

G. Pioch est un socialiste-pacifiste anarchisant, militant depuis une trentaine d'années. Poète et journaliste. Internationaliste-pacifiste pendant la guerre. Honnête homme.

Sur le communisme de guerre, je suis de ton avis et je l'ai écrit dans l'An I, p. 438-41. Si vous faites une brochure de De Lénine à Staline on peut y mettre en note ci-dessus un passage de ce livre.

Ferrat m'a fait une bonne impression. Ses amis aussi. Le terrible c'est qu'il ne peuvent aller nulle part dans l'état de sectarisme et de division en mouvement. 4 ou 5 groupes [qu]i [ ?\_et] entre [eux se] dévorent et se censur<èr>ent [ ?\_] en France, qui tous ensemble ne feraient pas encore un bon parti ; et des questions de personnalités jointes à des questions théoriques secondaires empêchent entre eux tout rapprochement. C'est irresponsable.

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<sup>80</sup> Münzenberg, murdered 1940 by Stalinist emissaries

<sup>81</sup> Revolutionary Spain.

<sup>82</sup> Trotsky arrived in Mexican exile

<sup>83</sup> With critical approbation, they continue to conceive Trotskyism as a means to vulgarise certain insights on revolutionary treason among a broader audience.



[list 135ob]

Je crois que nous devons {nous} maintenir dans la position  
défense de l'URSS mais 1<sup>o</sup> sans identifier l'URSS avec le  
régime stalinien, -2<sup>o</sup> sans en conclure ni l'union sacrée dans les  
pays alliés de l'URSS. La bureaucratie stalinienne actuelle  
défend tout de même la propriété collective des moyens de  
production, base d'une évolution vers le socialisme[, donc] pas la  
lutte de classe à reprendre.

Tout à fait de ton avis sur la nécessité d'un  
„opportunisme révolutionnaire“. Le dogme étouffe et tue. Là[-]  
dessus je t'écirai plus longuement bientôt.

Il me semble que le manque de nouvelles de ton fils  
est plutôt rassurant. On ne disparaît pas en Hollande sans laisser  
de traces. Il doit être parti. Ne serait-il as en Esp.[agne] ?

Amicalement

V.[ictor] S.[erge]

Cl-joint ma réponse à J.S.[chachtmann ?]

D'autres lui répondront aussi.

[..., list 133]

6 Avril 37 ~~134~~ 133

Buitenland

Mon cher ami,

Voici deux petits articles.-Je ne t'ai  
plus écrit depuis la mort de Pau[l ?], car je n'avais  
rien à te dire : on se sent muet, impuissant et  
inutile devant la mort et la douleur d'autrui.  
Et il peut venir de là une lassitude sans  
borner...à laquelle il ne faut rien céder...

Je pars samedi à Paris. Voici ma  
nouvelle adresse pour les journaux et le courrier :

8 rue César Franck, 8

Paris 15

Dès que j'aurai un logement, je t'écirai,  
espérant bien te voir dans peu/ ?/sans peur. A Paris,

je travaillerai avec le POUM et la Commission d'enquête sur le procès de Moscou<, > beaucoup plus utilement.

Au sujet de la Commission d'enquête. Connais-tu notre Comité de Paris ? Je pense Qu'il faut lui donner un caractère international et je te demande d'en faire partie. Nous te tiendrons au courant de tous nos travaux. I est formé de

1. Gultier-Boissière, André Philippe, Marco </> Martinet, Wullens, Mago. Paz, Rosmer, Victor Serge, André<e ?> Limbour, Georges Pioch, André Breton, et p.p. autres. Nous allons nous efforcer de soutenir la Commission d'enquête de New York et

[list 134]

134

~~135~~

Peut-être envoyer quelqu'un à N.[ew ]Y.[ork]  
-C'est une action nécessaire.

Ce qui se passe en Russie, e[t]  
qui continue à se passer est indescriptible.  
Mes deux articles te mettront au courant.  
Staline achève un coup d'état mais se trouve dans une impasse et n'a jamais été, lui-même, plus en péril qu'aujourd'hui.  
Tout peut arriver demain ; Tout.

Je te serre fortement la main,

Victor Serge '

3<sup>rd</sup> sample - 1<sup>st</sup> letter: Henk Sneevlieth to Victor Serge:  
'Amsterdam, 29 January 1937

Dear comrade Victor,

First, the address which you asked. It is Alice Nahuys, at Querido, Keizersgracht, 333, Amsterdam.

Second, your article "Enough blood[shed]" was too late for our newspaper of this week. But it was so good and impressive that we have directed it to be translated for a small flyer of the party, which will be sold in a few days. At the same time a copy of this translation (is) has been sent to the organised labour and political of Amsterdam, to which we proposed large a meeting against the trial.<sup>84</sup> Naturally the followers of Stalin were excluded from this possibility [not invited]. The coward Wynkoop<sup>85</sup> used two meetings of his party, organised for the memory of Lénin to solidarise himself completely with Stalin and to require the death of the 17 accused even before the gangster Vichinski came with his indictment.

Third, I write to you at this time under conditions which are very sad for me. Last Tuesday, at seven o'clock in the evening the only son who remained to me, left the house of his mother in Amsterdam and he has not returned until this moment. You will understand the situation well. He is 25 years old; over the last five years he has lived with his mother suffering each day for the loss of the other one<sup>1</sup>, which left us on 4 March 1932. Alas, we live in the great fear of a terrible misfortune. I do not dare to look into the nearest future. Perhaps you will see me one of the next days. I do need some friends

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<sup>84</sup> The mobilization described here is directed against the 1<sup>st</sup> Moscow show trial.

<sup>85</sup> \_#

to help me recover forces and I do not have many who can do that.

With my greetings

My work is stopped. It seems to me almost a crime to continue normal life.'

3<sup>rd</sup> sample – 2<sup>nd</sup> letter: Henk Sneevlieth to Victor Serge:

'Amsterdam, 4th February 1937

Victor Serge, Rue Joseph Bens, 134 Uocle, Brussels.

Dear comrade Serge,

Yesterday, Beb Spanjer<sup>86</sup> told me that you had not yet received the exact address of Querido yet. Probably our letters have crossed each other.<sup>87</sup> In any case, I send you the address you asked for once again:

Alice Nahuys, at Querido, Keizersgracht 333, Amsterdam.

Naville<sup>1</sup> writes to me from Paris that they expect the first brochure of the Old One within some days.<sup>88</sup> Did you already write to the Old Man? Could you give me his

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<sup>86</sup> \_#

<sup>87</sup> To Be specifies, the letter off oral Sneevliet and the communication transmitted by Beb Spanjer cuts coincided.

<sup>88</sup> Trotsky reached Mexico on a petrol ship on 19<sup>th</sup> of January 1937.

Mail was then taking considerably longer than from his previous exile in Oslo.

personal address? I need it. At the same time, could you give me some information requested by a comrade of the Hague on the Mexican painter Diego Rivera and his works? Do you still write articles for the French press? Give me the copies. Your articles have a great value for our work here. They have this human quality which one seeks in vain in the [writings of] pure politicians.

I insist to get an immediate answer. I still think about the possibility of visiting you. Even a conversation of a few hours could have a great significance for me. Did you receive my letter of the 29<sup>th</sup> January in which I communicated to you the disappearance of my 25 year old son? Until today not a [single] news! It is quite desperate

With my greetings [Henk Sneevliet, unsigned]'

3<sup>rd</sup> sample – 3rd letter: Victor Serge to Henk Sneevlieth:

'GRAND VENETIAN HOTEL, ALL LAST COMFORT, FIRST  
CLASS HOTEL-RESTAURANT, GREAT ROOMS AVAILABLE  
FOR WEDDINGS AND BANQUETS TELEPHONE  
ADMINISTRATION: 108.10, PUBLIC: 108.30 - 108.39,  
TRADE REGISTER OF LIEGE: 20492  
Liege, the ..... 19 .....  
PLACE OF the FRENCH REPUBLIC

[handwritten in Dutch:] letter [from] Serge  
[from] abroad [/NAS exterior relations department]

### 5.2.37

My dear Sneevliet,

I had well received your cordial letter of the other day.<sup>89</sup> I myself was plunged into dirty Darknes by the Moscow trials - and my [pende ?] sick in full crisis. And I have not found anything to answer you, my poor friend. In front of these things we are very powerless, there are not many useful words about it, nothing remains, nothing except for the courage of those who are accustomed to live [on], i.e. to suffer. This old courage, you have it. I still hope that better news for me will arrives from you. Your boy could have made himself a runaway, he might return. I can only [really] only believe [in this possibility], but as long as things remain uncertain, I'll keep fingers crossed for you.

I will continue to send copies of my principal articles I write to you. More and more, I think that for these black times it is unceasingly necessary to awake people, to call upon their feelings. This is why I do not like the dry theory and the polemic. - What black times, indeed! We whitness the end of Bolshevism, this is obvious, - and what an atrocious end it is!

I will return from Liege to Brussels tomorrow and will send the address of Diego Rivera to you at

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89 It is not quite clear whether Serge refers to the letter off 29th January gold off just the day before, 4th February 1937. His response obviously takes heed to the later letter ace well.

once.<sup>90</sup> - It is one of the greatest contemporary artists. A painter. Author of decorative frescos on many public buildings in Mexico, recalling in them all the history of the international labour movement and the Mexican revolution. One sees there, side by side, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky - and Juarez Madero, Zapata, Obregon. In Russia, his exhibitions had an immense success - and they deserved it. In his style, he is clearly inspired by the Indian perspective. He has an extraordinary artistic power, especially when creating masses. Founder of the communist movement in Mexico, in opposition for a long time.

In Spain, the calumnious campaign continues. A newspaper siding with Stalin published a drawing representing Nin carried by Franco who uses him like toy; and this newspaper writes that Nin always received German money - from Hitler. That's it.

In Paris, Sadoul has published an article against me in Huma<sup>1</sup> dealing out blows below the line. We were big friends, for this reason they obliged him to do that.

These days, you will see my son. - I shake your hand with all my heart

V[ictor] S[erge]

3<sup>rd</sup> sample – 4<sup>th</sup> letter: Henk Sneevlieth to Victor Serge:  
Amsterdam, 25 February [written in Dutch] 1937  
[handwritten in Dutch] Foreign country [goes abroad]

Dear comrade Serge,

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<sup>90</sup> He acutely avoids to mention his current guest, whose address Sneevliet has explicitly requested: Lev Davidovich Trotsky.

We have published your article on Ordjonikidze<sup>91</sup> in the newspaper of the party of this week. Some pages of your book "Destiny of a revolution"<sup>92</sup> are translated for our monthly review. I thank you very much for sending me the book and I hope that you achieve some results for your efforts to arrange a Dutch translation. Does the negotiation with Querido develop in a favourable direction? In the case he refuses I want to correspond with the Byleveld editors in Utrecht and van Lochem and Slaterus in Arnhem. It seems to me that these two houses are interested in the publication. The book is of great value as a source of information on current Russia. In our meetings where I speak about the Moscow trials, the contents of your book are of a great help to me. The Library of Labour in Paris has not yet sent me the brochure of Yvon. In a letter by the young Sedov<sup>93</sup> are some remarks on this brochure, and at the same time on the brochure by Maslow-Ruth Fischer. At the same time, the last number of "Our word"<sup>94</sup> features a bitter attack on Maslow, who is claimed to have contributed articles for some newspapers in Paris, of which "Tageszeitung"<sup>95</sup> were subsidised by Münzenberg<sup>96</sup>. I cannot judge the value of the charges, but I fear that once again the young guys in the centre<sup>97</sup> absorb themselves in satisfying their petty passions. For a long time already,

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<sup>91</sup> \_#

<sup>92</sup> \_#

<sup>93</sup> \_#

<sup>94</sup> The German language periodical „Unser Wort”\_#

<sup>95</sup> \_#

<sup>96</sup> \_#

<sup>97</sup> The centre for the constitution of a 4th international in Paris



they proceeded towards a final split with Maslow. From Barcelona, our young comrade van Driesten<sup>98</sup> sent me his impressions in a report for the central committee<sup>99</sup> as well as in a rather small personal letter sketching rather dark prospects. He speaks about a dangerous situation for the P.O.U.M. Did you understand anything from the opinions of the Old Man on the attitude of the centre<sup>100</sup> in the Spanish affair? I receive "Socialist Appeal" of America, in which Shachtman<sup>#</sup> and its friends from the former "Workers Party" develop their views on Spain and the P.O.U.M. It is because Shachtman probably has direct relations with the Old Man, that I am driven to the conclusion that Shachtman, who speaks up for a genuinely revolutionary party in Spain,<sup>101</sup> is expressing the ideas of the Old One in conformity. How long do we still have to wait before receiving [clear] statements [from Trotsky] on this question of the greatest importance?

We intent to translate the article of Georges Pioch<sup>#</sup> on your case, could you give me some details on the author? What newspaper is it from and on which dates has it been published? I need this information in three days (next Monday). It was well done from your part to write about the terrorist activity of Stalin-Ordjonikidze<sup>#</sup>. Of course, the Dutch followers of Stalin

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<sup>98</sup> <sup>#</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Of RSAP<sup>#</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Here he means the centre as personified in Trotsky, having reached Mexico.

<sup>101</sup> Which the POUM is definitely not in Shachtman's views.

did not hesitate to publish the Article of Sadoul in the “Platform”. You see that the publication of your work for Crapouillot\_# continues in our party newspaper. Next week, the chapter “H.E.P.<sup>102</sup> and the Opposition<sup>103</sup>” will be translated.<sup>104</sup> I have a question on that. Do you not approach too much the general line by arguing that the first period the Soviet economy was only a continuation of the economy of the World War (War Communism)? Was it not the revolutionary forces in the Soviets who wanted these economic forms to achieve the socialist society they longed to build? I remember the joke<sup>105</sup> of the old Bolsheviks, which was told to me by Joffe in Pékin\_#<sup>106</sup>. You probably know that one. Lenin says to Trotzki: Ljef esli nelzja idiom nazad.<sup>107</sup> In this “humoristical” statement built on the name of Lenin, the N.E.P was an act of rather reactionary a character in comparison with the socialist economy of the first period. If I remember well, it was the right-winger Bukharin who contributed much to the construction of the idea “War Socialism” which [presumably] was to be rectified by the N.E.P. in the consolidation period. This point seems rather important to me, as I reckon it necessary to discuss among “Trotskyites”: is it the last word of Marxist wisdom to maintain the need for

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<sup>102</sup> \_#

<sup>103</sup> \_#

<sup>104</sup> \_#

<sup>105</sup> Joke here as a German word

<sup>106</sup> Party Saych

<sup>107</sup> A Russian play on words meaning: “Lev [Davidovich Bronstein, alias Trotzki] if we can not do it [if you do not allow it], we go back”, the 5 initials form the name “Lenin”.

defending the Soviet Union and to maintain the point of view that the Soviet Union were a society on socialist bases?

It is possible to continue<sup>108</sup> indicating some existing problems, the influence of which manifests itself at every effort to unify the revolutionary elements outside of the second and the third International. It is necessary to prevent the reign of dogma. Flexibility in our formulas is necessary. In this time of a great confusion among the labour movement a certain revolutionary opportunism seems quite useful to me. There was too much of this opportunism in second congress of the Comintern,<sup>1</sup> and especially in the brochure of Lenin on the “infantile diseases”<sup>109</sup>.

Do you have contacts to the group of Ferrat\_#? He regularly sends me his publications, and while reading I got the impression that this group has great difficulties with the process of breaking up with Stalinism. They do give the impression of following a self-assured development [of their own]. These people there hesitate and they repeat the fault of Doriot\_ on another plan by wasting time for the revolutionary development of an independent party. This hesitation was disastrous for Doriot itself. If you have possibilities to influence these people do not neglect such a chance. No news up to

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<sup>108</sup> It is not quite clear what line of argument Sneeveliet wants to take up on this page either: to continue “the necessary discussion among us”, or continue “your contribution in our newspaper”.

<sup>109</sup> \_#

now about my son. It is now the fifth week in which we do not know anything how we could resolve this drama. With my fraternal greetings,  
[without signature]

3<sup>rd</sup> sample –5<sup>th</sup> letter: Victor Serge to Henk Sneevlieth:  
[Dutch handwriting: from] foreign country  
26 II 37

My dear friend,  
I do not have any news of Querido, although I sent the book in form of proofs in the accomplished form.

As for me, I can see no argument against Maslow benefitting from a periodical financed by a Stalin-rabble<sup>1</sup> to express what he thinks and communicate what he knows. Like you, I believe that the most idiotic sectarianism just continues with its devastations. This is not finished.

I recently saw Gorkin and I will see this evening a friend who returns from over there.<sup>110</sup> The situation is difficult, but the POUM seems to be in full growth and goes on very well. Obscure prospects. The possibilities of a working class victory remain very likely. Gorkin was in fear of an anarchistic putsch in answer to the Stalinist provocations. Malaga was lost for treason. There was perhaps (and there is perhaps still) the ultimate motive to provoke a very critical situation and impose Martial Law on such grounds. The attitude of the USSR is

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110 Revolutionary Spain.

obscure and perfidious. The weapons do not arrive at Catalonia, even though paid a long time ago.

I await Mexican newspapers to inform me on his ideas<sup>1</sup> about Spain. There were excellent statements for the general public.<sup>111</sup> Shachtman sticks to the sectarian viewpoint just as the Bulletin for the IVth, which still published theses of no use at all.

G. Pioch is an anarchising Socialist-pacifist, militant for about some thirty years. Poet and journalist. Internationalist-pacifist during the war. An honest man.

On War Communism<sup>#</sup>, I am of your opinion and I wrote it in "Year One", p. 438-41. If you make a brochure of "From Lenin To Stalin" you can add a note referring to the book.

Ferrat made a good impression to me. His/<sup>#</sup>her friends too. It is terrible that we cannot go anywhere with this sectarianism and splitting in our movement. In France, 4 or 5 groups who devour and censure one another. All of them taken together would not yet make up a good party; and personal questions in combination with secondary theoretical questions prevent any reconciliation between them. This is genuinely irresponsible.

I believe that we should maintain our position in favour of defending the Soviet Union. But first, without identifying the USSR with the regime of Stalin, and second, without concluding from that [to support at all

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111 With critical approval, they continues to conceive Trotskyism  
ace has means to popularises some insights one revolutionary  
treason among has broader goes down for hearing.

costs] the Holy Union<sup>112</sup> in the countries allied the USSR. All the same, the bureaucracy of Stalin defends collective ownership of the means of production, which are the basis of a development towards socialism, therefore it is not the point to start class struggle [all over] again.

I am entirely of your opinion about the need for „revolutionary opportunism“. Dogma chokes and kills. About that I will write to you in greater length soon.

It seems to me that the lack of news from your son is rather reassuring. One does not disappear in Holland without leaving traces. He has gone somewhere. Could it not be Spain?

In friendship,  
Victor Serge

Attached my answer to J. Schachtmann[?] Others will answer him as well.

3<sup>rd</sup> sample – 6<sup>th</sup> letter: Victor Serge to Henk Sneevlieth:  
6 April 37  
[Dutch handwriting: from] foreign country

Mon dear friendly,  
Here are two small articles. I did not write you any more since the death of Paul, because I did not have anything to say to you: one feels dumb, impotent and useless in front of death and the pain of others. And it can stem from that a lassitude without limits... to which one should not heed at all...

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<sup>112</sup> i.e. the United Front

Saturday, I will leave for Paris. Here is my new address for the newspapers and the mail: 8 rue César Franck, 8 Paris 15

As soon as I have a flat, I will write to you, hoping well to see you soon. In Paris, I will be able to work much more usefully with the POUM and the Board of inquiry on the Moscow trials.

About the Board of inquiry. Do you know our Committee of Paris? I think that it is necessary to give him an international profile and [therefore] I would ask you to become a part of it. We will keep you informed of all our work. It consists of 1. Gultier-Boissière, André Philippe, Marco Martinet, Wullens, Mago. Paz, Rosmer, Victor Serge, Andre Limbour, Georges Pioch, André Breton, and p.p. others. We will endeavour to support the Board of inquiry of New York and perhaps send somebody to there – that is a necessary action.

What happens in Russia, and what continues to happen is beyond description. My two articles will put to you to date. Stalin completes a coup d'etat but is in a dead end and never has he, himself, been in a more dangerous position than today. Everything can happen tomorrow, everything.

I strongly shake your hand, Victor Serge'

4<sup>th</sup> sample: our Correspondence between Henk Sneevliet and Rolf Katz

Maybe it is time to turn attention from the celebrated big shots? To put it the most negatively possible, we really did have quite enough of them reading all this, did we not? We had Nin, cursing his best friends in his last letter and forgetting to mention that there is a Fascist front approaching all of them, Gramsci, dreaming about workers autonomy and in the meantime cutting short the autonomy of a Russian woman, sacrificing decades of her life to attend him, Serge, delivering his wife to psychiatric care to have free hands for a new love affair, all the time boasting about his “work for the POUM” and the splendour of possibilities opening up in the new and ever-more-contradictory Soviet Union. Finally there was Henk Sneevliet, the modest facilitator between all of them. When he had to live through a day in his NAS trade union secretariat without the help of his female secretaries, he would grow quite sullen and laconic. “I could not write to you”, he would reflect such days later, “because my secretary was ill”. Looking at the everyday political economy of communication work, Henk was a classist with sexist modes of dividing work and control. So, in our 4<sup>th</sup> sample, we get the second character of working folk after Tania Schucht. Rolf Katz has a hard time, fighting with his deficient typewriter. He is a scientist. He works for a for cutting edge investigation in the vicinity of Horkheimer and Adorno as well as for the most working-class of all German fighting-back unions during the interwar period, the DIV. With its militant builders and salespersons in incessant industrial action against a rising tide of deflation, the Deutsche Industrie Verband had been able to keep proletarian agency of the German revolution 1918-1923 awake and active against bourgeois consensus building by



Social Democrat front organisations and the redesigning of Comintern interference after 1925. When Moskow and Ruth Fisher (mentioned in Henk's letter to Serge reproduced above) ordered the dissolution of German Communist trade unions and the surrender of its membership to Social Democrat institutions, large parts of the union simply refused. They had an arsenal of civil resistance to their dismantlement which quite surprised Moscow administration. Still in 1929, this community was able to keep up substantial fights in the places of work, namely in the building, textile and retail sector. 1929 is the year of an unprecedented onslaught on proletarian hegemony in German Crisis Capitalism and Europe as a whole. In our 4<sup>th</sup> sample, we can witness how this economic pressure finally succeeded in what employers, Social Democrat party technocrats and Moscow commanders had tried to do in vain during the preceding decade. Now, in 1929, their renewed attacks took the form of a concerted action... and succeeded. The 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1929 was a renewed police-induced bloodshed on the streets of Berlin as a decade earlier. Still, the independent union section of the builders survived the death of the center which made Rolf Katz one of the millions of unemployed in the course of our slice taken out of his correspondence with Henk. After the police murders of Mayday 1929, their organ "Bauprolet" successfully mobilised for a first proletarian street parade after the butcher to open their congress. The Communist party, though having entered in its 3<sup>rd</sup> period was unrelentingly eager to finish off such independent trade unionism. But as 60 years later some kilometres east, it turned out that the rank-and-file of the

independent union were in fact Communist party officials, with a number of MPs attending and openly defending the building workers' independent conference. Now, there is a significant difference between a communist Polish nomenclature taking in Catholic benediction and in the same conservative move openly organising to strike down its own government, thus providing the country beyond the line of extreme poverty in an affluent Europe 1980, 1981 on the one side and the 1929 mobilisation of proletarian resistance to the onslaught of Fascism in the centre of Europe's imminent economic implosion on the other side of the Odra. As has now been firmly established, the 1933 mount-up of brownshirts was a feeble reflection of the 1930 onslaught. The breakthrough of Hitler to take over state power in 1933 was not a fruit of street terror any more as could have happened 1930, but of the premeditated manipulation and financial assistance forwarded by leading figures in German Armament Capital and the landed Oligarchy of Agrarian Reactionaries. The real fight for hegemony in crisis started in 1929/1930. Why it was so spectacularly lost in the German case cannot be answered by a slice of personal correspondence, yet, we get a densely atmospheric insight of what was happening in these months inside the autonomous sections of the German class-based left. Our young protagonist Katz suggests from his daily work in the independent trade union, that Korsch's Marxism was rather not a class-based phenomenon, but a moralist business – later this allowed Karl Korsch to make a meagre living in the US-academic machinery out of it. Rolf Katz migrated to an environment in the America which promised to be somewhat more responsive to labour's

demands. In an Argentina of social upheaval which was at the time not yet Peronist, Katz founded an ingenious scientific intelligence for supplying economic intelligence. His Argentinean writings do not fall short of the brilliance and analytic modesty we can witness in the following sample. Yet, he was a young one in 1929, full of pretentious make-believe for the abilities he was just then forming and not really able to believe in them by himself. He obviously needed somebody who needed his advice. If he were born 10 years younger, he would quite probably have ended up in Moscow and who would be surprised to discover him in the circles around Zinoviev. At the end of the 1920s the wind had changed. Katz was orienting his faculties westwards, learning fluent Dutch, preparing to withstand the pressures of migration by far better than his fellow migrant to Latin America, Stefan Zweig<sup>113</sup>. As his elder colleagues in working-class struggles featured in this collection, Rudolf Katz owes much to skill transfer by solidarity networks and complementary internationalist solidarity. But the path of his militancy was effectively restricted to a much more humble agency compared to what the temporary window of opportunities opened and used up by the first generation of Comintern activists had in stall.

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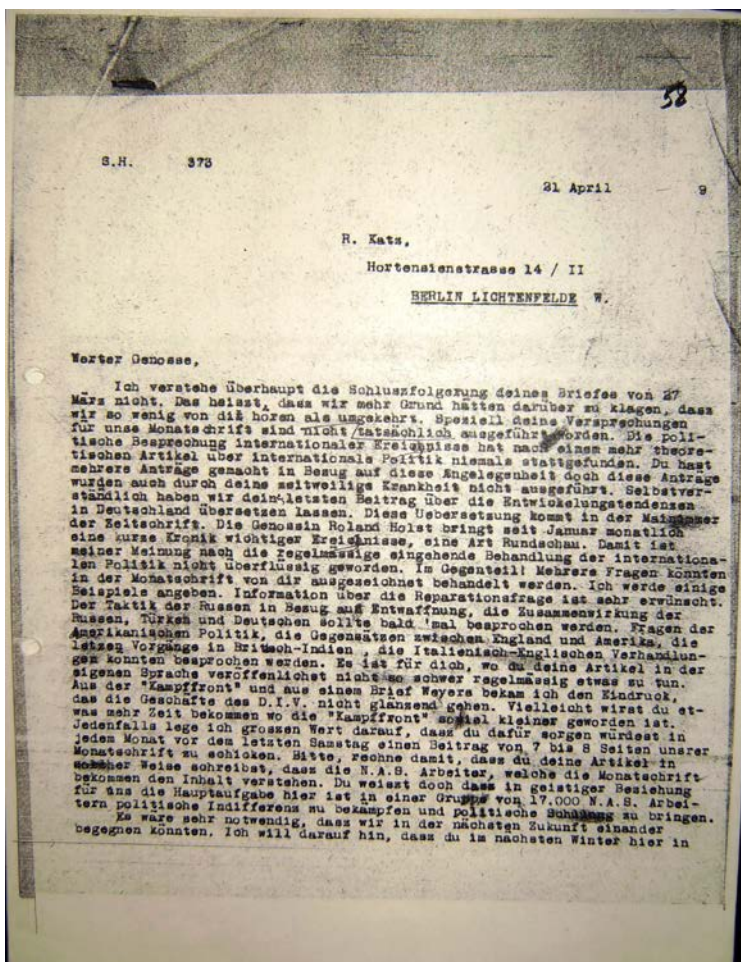
<sup>113</sup> Stefan Zweig, whom Hans Eisler, the composer of the official hymn of the Comintern, called a “veritable cultural industrialist” committed suicide in his Brazilian exile out of a feeling of isolation as a German language writer, just when Rudolf Katz professionalized on the narrow market of economical expertise in the neighbouring country.

(see reproduction 411, 412, 413, 421, 423, 431 and 432  
transcribed character by character<sup>114</sup> and translated into  
British English<sup>115</sup> underneath)

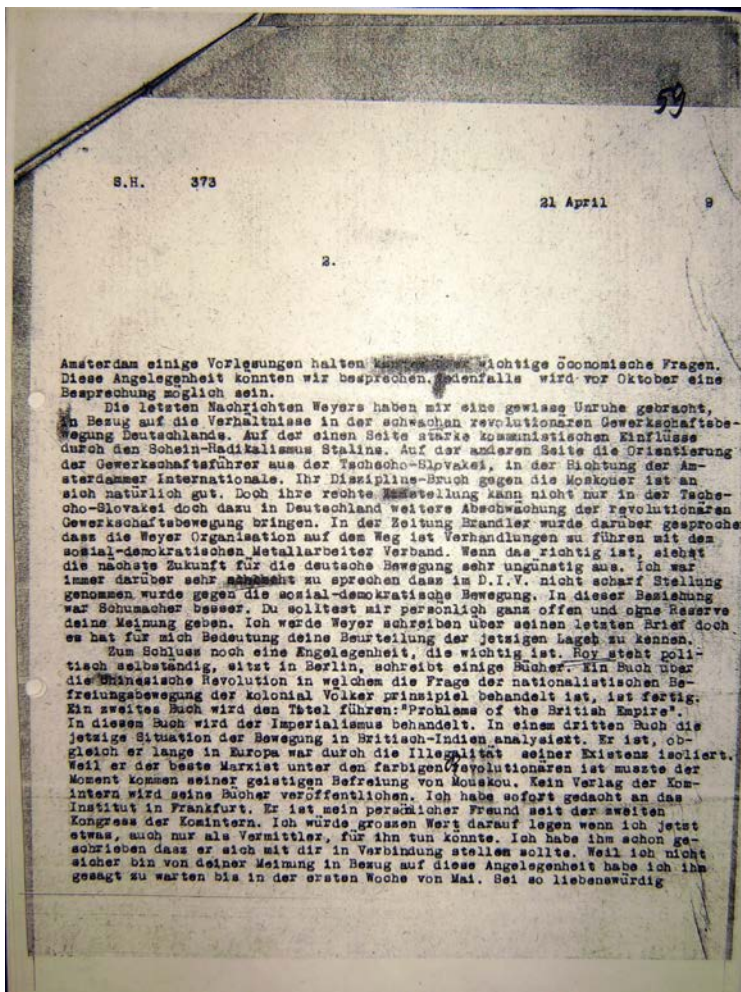
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<sup>114</sup> by the author, kindly proof-read by Bernhard H. Bayerlein,  
Mannheim.

<sup>115</sup> by the author, kindly proof-read by Bernhard H. Bayerlein,  
Mannheim.

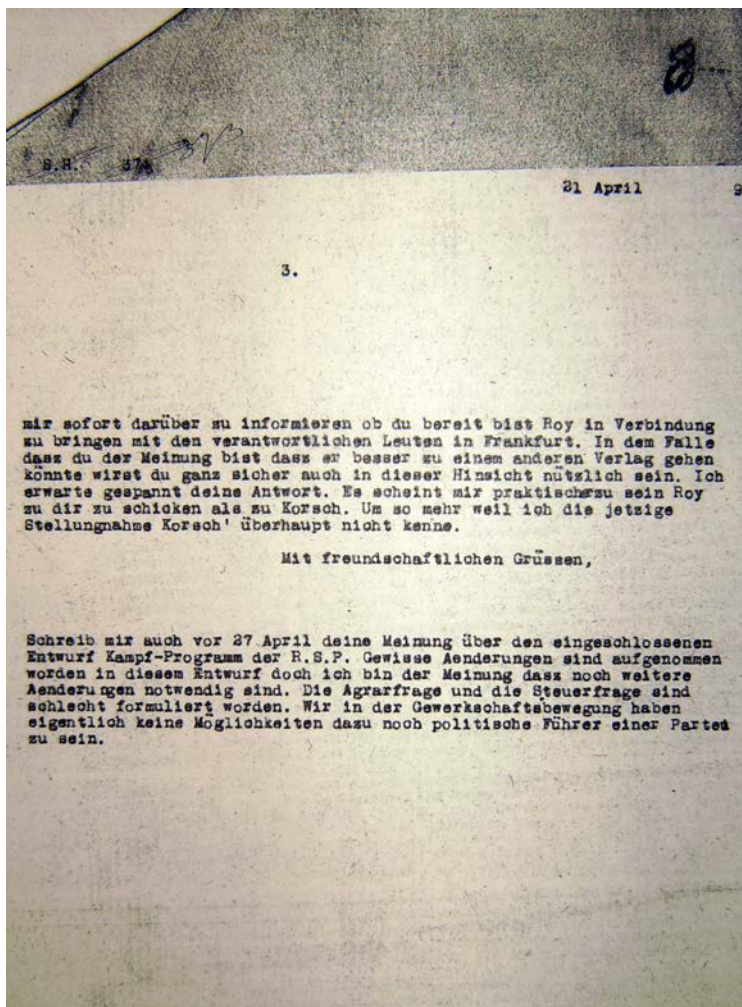


Capture411: 8 years earlier – the office routines facilitating Sneevliet's enormous daily quantities of professional letters have hardly changed at all within that decade, 1st page of our letter from Henk Sneevliet to Rolf Katz, 21th Apr 1929; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 12: list 58.



Capture412: in search for a good German expression:  
correction marks on the original typescript and their negative  
impact on the blueprint, 2nd page of our letter from Henk

*Sneevliet to Rolf Katz, 21th Apr 1929; facsimile of RGASPI  
(Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 12: list 59.*



*Capture413: The Dutch political police was convinced that Sneeveliet had split his RSP from the Communist Party solely to flatter his taste for personal fame and glory – in this private letter however, quite to the contrary of the police assumption, he modestly seeks advice from a young German scientist to elaborate a better program for the forthcoming election campaign, though he has hardly any real time for that besides his trade union duties , 3rd page of our letter from Henk Sneeveliet to Rolf Katz, 21th Apr 1929; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 12: list 60.*



*Industrieland*  
*Weyr*  
Berlin-Lichterfelde-W., 23.4.29.  
Hortensienstr. 14/II *al* 74

Wert: Genosse Sneevliet,

1. Ich schrieb Dir heute bereits über Roy, damit der Brief noch mit dem Mittagzug nach Amsterdam ging.

2. Ueber Zeitung: Mir scheint Dein Vorschlag recht. Es freut mich, dass ich Dein Schweigen falsch gedeutet hatte. Ich glaube, dass die wichtigste zu behandelnde Frage die der Reparationen ist. dann englische Wahlen. Ich werde alles ganz einfach schreiben.

3. Auch ich habe sehr den Wunsch, Dich zu sehen. Ich habe sehr bedauert, dass Du nicht, wie ich telegrafierte, von Aachen nach Frankfurt kamst. Vielleicht ist es Dir eher möglich, mal nach Frankfurt zu kommen, ich werde ungefähr ab 15. Mai mich dort auf einige Monate aufhalten. Du könntest im Institut wohnen, so dass die Kosten nur Reise und Essen wären. Dafür könntest Du aber auch einmal gründlich mit den Leuten im Institut sprechen.

4. Ich bin gerne bereit bei Euch Vorträge zu halten. Finanziell würde ich nur Reise und etwas für die grösseren Kosten in Holland gegen Deutschland nötig haben, natürlich die geringste Summe wie möglich. Da Du dies aber anschnidest, möchte ich, ohne aufdringlich sein zu wollen, Dir zur Ueberlegung einen anderen Vorschlag machen, wobei ich nicht weiss, wie weit dazu Möglichkeit besteht ( Sprachschwierigkeiten, finanzielle Voraussetzungen, technische usw. usw.): Ich habe bisher immer die Erfahrung gemacht, dass wirksamer als einzelne Vorträge gründliche Schulung ist. Ist es nicht möglich irgendwo in billiger Gegend während der Urlaubszeit der Arbeiter, die sich auf diese einrichten wollen, eine Art von Sommer Schule zu machen, etwa 8 - 14 Tage, wo Ihr auch organisatorische gewerkschaftliche und politische Fragen nach vorher sorgfältigen Plan lehrt.

5. Ich deutete schon im meinen 1. Schreiben an, dass Biehahn seine Broschüre fertig hat. Hier wird sie vorläufig nicht gedruckt werden können. Ihr wolltet Sie ursprünglich holländisch herausbringen. Sie ist sehr gut geworden. besteht noch die Neigung bei Euch, sie herauszubringen? Wenn ja, dann schreibe doch gleich an ihn - Dr. Walter Biehahn, Frankfurt a.M. - Hedderheim, 105 in der Römerstadt - dass er Dir das Manuskript schickt.

6. Die Lage im Verband ist mehr als ernst. Was die Verhandlungen mit dem DMV anbelangt, um dies vorwegzunehmen, so hat weder Weyer noch Richard Müller nochsonst jemand aus der Zentrale verhandelt. Wohl aber wie ich behauptet, dass der Bezirksleiter von Berlin, Franz Müller, bereits im Oktober, vor dem Reichskongress durch den Vorsitzenden des Berliner Ortsausschuss des ADGB um Verhandlungen nachgesucht habe. Er bestritt dies, aber Ulrich hielt auch bei einer Verhandlung vor einer Untersuchungskommission des DIV an der Behauptung fest, ebenfalls in einem Briefe. Franz Müller sollte ihn verklagen, um vor Gericht Bredow zu zwingen, auszusagen - Bredow scheint Müller zu decken - aber bisher ist er diesem ausgewichen.

Nun hat die Lage des Verbandes sich seit längerer Zeit veräussert. Eher ich auf die zu Grunde liegenden Fragen eingehe, den Aussenverlauf: Da ich Dir hier alles sage, so weit ich es selbst weiss, bitte ich Dich, dies alles vertraulich behandeln zu wollen, so zwar, dass Du Deinen engeren Leuten darüber berichten kannst, aber verhüten musst, dass Dinge wieder nach Deutschland gelangen ( also etwa über Aussenarbeitergewerkschaften usw. ) Zwar werden diese Dinge in Laufe der Debatte in Deutschland alle genau bekannt, aber vorläufig muss ich die Vertraulichkeitsbedingung stellen. Der Verband geriet bald nach dem Reichskongress in eine schwierige Lage: Schon vorher war der Mitgliederstand zurückgegangen. die ungewöhnlich lange Kälteperiode hatte einen starken Einnahmeschwund mit sich gebracht. Die Bezirke hielten mit den Geldern zurück. Hätten die alle abgerechnet, wäre die Krise im Verband nicht so gekommen. etwa 17 000 - Aussenstände, Schulden der Bezirke an die Zentrale bestehen.

Es kamen andere Dinge hinzu: Riehl hat aus dem Bezirk West-Sachsen einen Inseratenverband gemacht. Wahrscheinlich - aber nicht nachweisbar finanziell interessiert an den Inseraten - ist die Inseratensammlung seine Haupttätigkeit gewesen, bestimmende Inserate seine ganze Politik. Die Zentrale beschloss nun, die Leipziger Beilage nicht mehr durch Leipzig sondern durch die Zentrale zu verwalten. Wir hätten damit die Kampffront einheitlich umsetzen herausgebracht. Leipzig weigerte sich entschieden. Die Zentrale beschloss als ausserordentliche Massnahme um den Mitgliedern mit gutem Beispiel voranzugehen eine Gehaltskürzung um 25% vorläufig auf 4 Wochen vorzunehmen. Dies wurde nur von der Zentrale und

Capture421: taking up pace for cross-border conversion, after a terribly moody and defeatist letter a month before Katz has

*obviously understood, that his Dutch contacts could be much more valuable than his remaining stakes in a disintegrating German trade union federation, 1st page of our letter from Rolf Katz to Henk Sneevliet, 23th April 1929; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 12: list 74.*

von Bez... , dessen Kassierer auf Seiten der Zentrale stand und steht, durchgeführt. Die anderen, insbesondere Leipzig weigerten sich entschieden. Schließlich musste die Zentrale ~~xxx~~ die beiliegenden Beschlüsse, die Du mir aber unbedingt umgehend zurücksenden musst, zu fassen, u. einer Rettungsaktion zu unternehmen, und sie dem Beirat vorzulegen.

Die Fronde führte nun schon vorher der "prinzipielle" "moralische" Korschmidt Krebs, der Brandenburger Bezirksleiter. Zu seiner Charakterisierung nur folgendes: Nach seinen eigenen Angaben besteht sein Bezirk aus 217 Mitglieder, die fast zur Hälfte arbeitslos, die andere aber Kurzarbeiter sind. trotzdem hat er den äussersten Widerstand geleistet, als die Zentrale verlangte, dass bei einem solchen Stand kein Freigestellter zu halten sei. Seine Abrechnung an die Zentrale deckte noch nicht einmal die Zeitungskosten für seinen Bezirk. Trotzdem deswegen schärfster Kampf, auch gegen die Kürzung von 25%.

Auf dem Beirat kam es zu einem offenen Eklat: Zur Charakterisierung nur folgendes: Der Vorsitzende des Kontrollausschusses (Leipziger!) stellte dem Antrag des K.A., den Reichsleiter und Kassierer abzusetzen, auf Grund der vorgelegten Materialien gegen diese, über diese aber könnte er nicht sprechen weil er das Material nicht genau kenne, sondern müsse es den Ankläger überlassen, zu begründen! Obwohl statutenmässig verlangt wird, dass der Kontrollausschuss dem Angeklagten die Anklageschrift zur Rückkürzerung übermittelt, ist dies nicht nur nicht geschehen, sondern sogh Weyer wie Dahm wussten überhaupt nichts von diesem Verfahren, wurden ohne gehört zu werden, verurteilt.

Nach den Referaten von Weyer, dem Kassierer und dem Obmann der Revisoren, hielten die 3 Prinzipiellen ihre Anklagereden, Ribhl, hauptsächlich über die Inserate, Krebs über allerlei kleines Dreckzeug etwa 1 1/2 Stunden, Müller (Berlin) ebenso. Keinerlei prinzipielle Gesichtspunkte. Darauf, ehe nun Diskussion war, verliessen sie den Raum, sprengten Beirat und werden wohl versuchen sich selbstständig zu machen. Obwohl sie wenig Mitgliedschaft behalten werden (Müller wird etwa 10 - 15% behalten) Westsaachen ist schwieriger, mit ihnen gingen die Vertreter von Baden und Mitteldeutschland, wo jedoch nicht allzuviel Mitgliedschaft, muss man doch ganz klar erkennen, dass dies der Todesstoss für den D.I.V. ist. Innerhalb wohl von 4 Wochen wird er aufgehört haben zu existieren.

Dies der äussere Verlauf (ohne allen Details) Natürlich sind es tiefere Gründe: KP-Taktik ist wesentlich dabei. Dann aber überhaupt die veränderte Situation in Deutschland. Es scheint, dass der DIV sich so lange halten konnte, wie das deutsch Proletariat im Angriff war, aber heute, wo so grosse Arbeitslosigkeit herrscht, wirkt das Unterstützungswesen des ADGB doch so sehr, als dass eine wesentliche Bewegung Stand abhän könnte. Dazu war er auch nicht konsolidiert genug. In Holland ist das alles ja wesentlich anders. Ich kann jetzt hier nicht auf alle Fragen eingehen, man muss jedoch sehen, dass die revolutionäre Gewerkschaftsbewegung einen starken Schlag erlitten hat. Das der DIV einmal zu Grunde gegangen wäre, schien mir in den letzten Monaten sicher, diese Form aber ist wesentlich Schuld der 3 Bezirksleiter die aus durch und durch egoistischen Motiven handelten.

Es lässt sich nicht absehen, was ~~xxx~~ nun kommt: Dass die Herausbildung einer wirklichen revolutionären Gewerkschaftsbewegung in Deutschland damit sehr verzögert wird, ist gewiss unrichtig wäre es, anzunehmen, dass sie überhaupt nicht mehr entstehen würde. Wann? Das ist eine andere Frage.

7. Nun zu dem Kampfprogramm: Mir scheint dies wesentlich besser als das letzte. Es ist systematisch. Ich kann nicht allzuviel sagen, da ich nicht genau genug die sozialpolitischen Verhältnisse in Holland kenne, weil vieles Fingerspitzensache ist, die man nur im Lande selbst beurteilen kann. Unter dieser Reservur folgendes: A Bestuursinrichting: Wäre hier nicht die Forderung nach der Republik richtig? Ferner welches ist die verfassungsmässige Befugnisse der Krone? Nur dekorativ und Verbindung mit dem Reich wie in England? Müssten nicht hier Forderungen aufgestellt werden? Welche die Rechte des Ministeriums?

Zu B, 1: Ich kann nicht beurteilen, ob Platz für die Propaganda des 75 Stundentags ist. Besteht fast überall der 8 Stundentag? Ist dies eine Forderung auf die die Massen reagieren werden?

Zu E, 3: Nach den englischen Erfahrungen erscheint mir die ausdrückliche Hervorhebung der Spezialistenbehandlung und der Spezialbehandlung (Rechnen, Operationen usw) nach Erfordernis angebracht. Die Health Insurance Acts schliessen diese aus.

F, 4: die passende Arbeit müsste fixiert werden, als Berufsarbeit oder berufähnliche. Die Arbeitslosengesetzgebung, sowohl in Deutschland wie in England sieht die Übertragung auch in andere Berufe vor, was schädlich für

Capture422: in the heat of recapitulating the debate, Katz mixes Northern German folk grammar errors with tones of a new Hessian accent while preparing to work next to

Horkheimer and Adorno for the "emerging of a real revolutionary trade union movement in Germany", 2nd page of our letter from Rolf Katz to Henk Sneevliet, 23th April 1929; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 12: list 75.

3

den Arbeiter in seiner weiteren Verwendung für seinen Beruf sein kann 76  
 (Beispiel: Fräsemechaniker, der grobe, schwere Landarbeit machen muss und dadurch  
 Gefühl in Fingerspitzen sucht.)  
 Ebenso muss Massnahme enthalten sein, gegen Ausstossung aus der Versicherung  
 wegen nicht richtiger Arbeitssuche ( So in England sind etwa 40 000 entfernt  
 worden, weil "not genuinely seeking work" )  
 Ueber Landwirtschaft werde ich Dir noch schreiben, weil ich darüber noch  
 nachdenken muss.  
 L, l scheint mir schelchte Formulierung mit "burgerlyke" Regierung, an  
 alle Regierungen des heutigen - kapitalistischen Holland, auch wenn sie aus  
 der holländischen Sozialdemokratie gebildet wird.  
 Steuer: Ich würde vorschlagen: ~~xxx~~Abschaffung sämtlicher Steuern bis  
 auf :  
 1. Stark progressive Einkommensteuer bei Personen und Gesellschaften  
 2. Stark progressive Vermögenssteuer  
 3. Stark progressive Erbschaftsteuer ( England bis zu 60% )  
 Sonst bin ich mit diesem - als ungefähres Wahlprogramm einverstanden  
 Betonen würde ich, dass dies nicht Sozialismus ist, Kampfprogramm für soziale  
 Reformen innerhalb der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft, das müsste aber  
 auch ausdrücklich festgelegt werden.

Mit besten Gruss

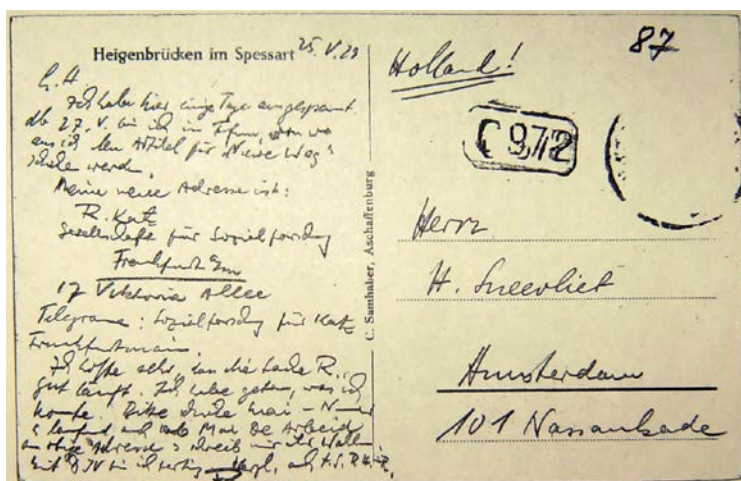
Rolf Katz

Capture423: A third friend of Sneevliet who likes to end in the middle of the last page with a fulminate signature, whether from Berlin, Bruxelles of Barcelona European class culture proves remarkably uniform as Thomas Mann remarked during the contemporary success of his novel "Buddenbrocks, decline of a family", 3rd page of our letter from Rolf Katz to Henk Sneevliet, 23th April 1929; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 12: list 76.





*Capture431: Germany - Romantic and Cosmopolitan - as we will never see it again: a revolutionary Scientist of Jewish background relaxing in a German backwater...all the while doing his very best to advance the Marxist forces in the Indian liberation movement with this modest postcard, sent by Rolf Katz to Henk Sneevliet, 25th May1929; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 12: list 87ob.*



Capture432: Holland! ... if need be cable me just under the address: "Sozialforschung für Katz", the telegraphic central office of our big city on the Main river will find out by itself who is this eminently practical networker next to Horkheimer and Adorno having only just arrived from crisis-stricken Berlin, back side of our postcard from Rolf Katz to Henk Sneevliet, 25th May 1929; facsimile of RGASPI (Moscow) fond 552, opis 1- delo 12: list 87ob.

4<sup>th</sup> sample: our Correspondence between Henk Sneevliet and Rolf Katz

<see reproduction 1<sup>st</sup> letter: 411 page 1 in the pdf-file - list 58, 412 pdf-page 2 - list 59 and 413 pdf-page 3 - list 60, 2<sup>nd</sup> letter: 421 pdf-page 4 - list 74, 422 pdf-page 5 - list 75 and 423 pdf-page 6 - list 76, 3<sup>rd</sup> letter 431 pdf-page 7 - list 87 and 432 pdf-page 87 ob - list 87>

Transcription character by character from the original manuscripts, three letters exchanged between *Henk Sneevliet and Rolf Katz*, from 21th April to 25th May 1929; facsimile of RGASPI <Moscow> fond 552, opis 1- delo 12: 1<sup>st</sup> letter list 58, 59 and 60, 2<sup>nd</sup> letter list 74, 75 and 76, 3<sup>rd</sup> communication, postcard list 87ob and 87.

GERMAN

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Transcription character by character from the original manuscripts, three letters exchanged between *Henk Sneevliet and Rolf Katz*, from 21th April to 25th May 1929; facsimile of RGASPI <Moscow> fond 552, opis 1- delo 12: [1<sup>st</sup> letter] list 58, 59 and 60, [2<sup>nd</sup> letter] list 74, 75 and 76, [3<sup>rd</sup> communication, postcard] list 87ob and 87.

‘[list 58] Sneevliet to Katz

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R.[olf] Katz,

Hortensienstrasse 14/II

BERLIN LICHTENFELDE W.

Werter Genosse,

Ich verstehe überhaupt die Schlussfolgerung deines Briefes von 27. März nicht. Das heisst, dasz wir mehr Grund hätten darüber zu klagen, dasz wir so wenig von dir hören als umgekehrt. Speziell deine Versprechungen für unsere Monats[s]chrift sind tatsächlich nicht<sup>116</sup> ausgeführt worden. Die politische Besprechung internationaler Ereignisse hat nach einem mehr theoretischen Artikel über internationale Politik niemals stattgefunden. Du hast mehrere <Anträge> [Vorschläge] gemacht in Bezug auf diese Angelegenheit doch diese <Anträge> [Vorschläge] wurden[,] auch durch deine zeitweilige Krankheit[,] nicht ausgeführt. Selbstverständlich haben wir dein{en} letzten Beitrag über die Entwick<e>lungstendenzen

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<sup>116</sup> The hand correction of his secretaries dictando was unnecessary, the expression made more sense before Henk going over it.

in Deutschland übersetzen lassen. Diese Übersetzung kommt in der Mainnummer der Zeitschrift. Die Genossin Roland Holst bringt seit Januar monatlich eine kurze <K>[Ch]ronik wichtiger Ereignisse, eine Art Rundschau. Damit ist meiner Meinung nach <die> [eine] regelmässig<e> eingehende Behandlung der internationa-

len Politik nicht überflüssig geworden. Im Gegenteil! Mehrere Fragen könnten in der Monat[s]schrift von dir ausgezeichnet behandelt werden. Ich werde einige Beispiele angeben. Information über die Reparationsfrage ist sehr erwünscht.

D[i]e<r> Taktik der Russen in Bezug auf Entwaffnung, d<ie>[as]

Zusammenwirk<ung>[en] der

Russen, Türken und Deutschen sollte bald mal besprochen werden. Fragen der A{a}merikanischen Politik, die Gegensätze[n] zwischen England und Amerika, die letzten Vorgänge in Britisch-Indien, die Italienisch-Englischen Verhandlungen könnten besprochen werden. Es ist für dich, wo du deine Artikel in der eigenen Sprache veröffent[li]chst nicht so schwer regelmässig etwas zu tun, Aus der „Kampffront“\_ und aus einem Brief Weyers\_ bekam ich den Eindruck, das[s] die Geschäfte des D.I.V. nicht glänzend gehen. Vielleicht wirst du etwas mehr Zeit bekommen wo die „Kampffront“ wo viel kleiner geworden ist. Jedenfalls lege ich groszen Wert darauf, dasz du dafür sorgen würdest in jedem Monat vor dem letzten Samstag einen Beitrag von 7 bis 8 Seiten unserer Monat[s]schrift zu schicken. Bitte<,> rechne damit, dasz du deine Artikel in solcher Weise schreibst, dasz die N.A.S. Arbeiter, welche die Monat[s]schrift bekommen den Inhalt verstehen. Su weisst doch[,] dasz in geistiger Beziehung für uns die Hauptaufgabe hier ist[,] in einer Gruppe von 17.000 N.A.S. Arbeitern politische Indifferenz zu bekämpfen und politische Schlußung zu bringen.

Es wäre sehr notwendig, dasz wir in der nächsten Zukunft einander begegnen könnten. Ich will darauf hin[aus], dasz du im nächsten Winter hier in [list 59] S.[neevliet] H.[enk] 373

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Amsterdam einige Vorlesungen halten könntest über wichtige ö<c>[k]onomische Fragen.

Diese Angelegenheit könnten wir besprechen. Jedenfalls wird vor Oktober eine Besprechung möglich sein.

Die letzten Nachrichten Weyers haben mir eine gewisse Unruhe gebracht, in Bezug auf die Verhältnisse in der schwachen revolutionären Gewerkschaftsbewegung Deutschlands. Auf der einen Seite st<ä>[a]rke kommunistische<n> Einflüsse durch den Schein-Radikalismus Stalins. Auf der anderen Seite die Orientierung



der Gewerkschaftsführer aus der Tschcho-Slovakei, in der Richtung der Amsterdamer Internationale. Ihr Disziplin-Bruch gegen die Mosk<u>auer ist an sich natürlich gut. Doch ihre rechte Einstellung kann nicht nur in der Tschcho-Slovakei doch dazu in Deutschland weitere Abschwächung der revolutionären Gewerkschaftsbewegung bringen. In der Zeitung Brandler\_ wurde darüber gesprochen

dass die Weyer[-]Organisation auf dem Weg ist[,] Verhandlungen zu führen mit dem sozial-demokratischen Metallarbeiter[-]Verband. Wenn das richtig ist, sieht die nächste Zukunft für die deutsche Bewegung sehr ungünstig aus. Ich war immer darüber sehr schlecht zu sprechen dass im D.I.V. nicht scharf Stellung genommen wurde gegen die sozial-demokratische Bewegung. In dieser Beziehung war Schumacher\_ besser.<sup>117</sup> Du solltest mir persönlich ganz offen und ohne Reserve Deine Meinung <geben> [mitteilen]. Ich werde Weyer schreiben über seinen letzten Brief doch

es hat für mich Bedeutung[,] deine Beurteilung der jetzigen Lage zu kennen.

Zum Schlusß noch eine Angelegenheit, die wichtig ist. Roy steht politisch selbständig, sitzt in Berlin, schreibt einige Bücher. Ein Buch über die chinesische Revolution\_[,] in welchem die Frage der nationalistischen Befreiungsbewegung der kolonial[isierten] Völker prinzipiell[,] behandelt ist, ist fertig. Ein zweites Buch wird den Titel führen: „Problems of the British Empire“\_. In diesem Buch wird der Imperialismus behandelt. In einem dritten Buch die jetzige Situation der Bewegung in Britisch-Indien analysiert. Er ist, obgleich er lange in Europa war durch die Illegalität in seiner Existenz isoliert. Weil er der beste Marxist unter den farbigen „Revolutionären ist[,] musste der Moment kommen seiner geistigen Befreiung von Moskau\_. Kein Verlag der Komintern wird seine Bücher veröffentlichen. Ich habe sofort gedacht an das Institut in Frankfurt. Er ist mein persönlicher Freund seit dem zweiten Kongress der Komintern. Ich würde großen Wert darauf legen[,] ihm zu helfen[,] wenn ich jetzt

etwas, auch nur als Vermittler, für ihn tun könnte. Ich habe ihm schon geschrieben[,] dass er sich mit Dir in Verbindung <stellen> [setzen] sollte. Weil ich nicht sicher bin <von> [über] deine<r> Meinung in Bezug auf diese Angelegenheit habe ich ihm gesagt zu warten bis <in der> [zur] ersten [Mai-]Woche <von Mai>. Sei so liebenswürdig

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<sup>117</sup> Bauarbeiter-Verband

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3.

mi<r>[ch] sofort darüber zu informieren[,] ob Du bereit bist[,] Roy in Verbindung zu bringen mit den verantwortlichen Leuten in Frankfurt. In dem Fall<e> dasz du der Meinung bist dasz er besser zu einem anderen Verlag gehen könnte wirst du ganz sicher auch in dieser Hinsicht nützlich sein. Ich erwarte gespannt deine Antwort. Es scheint mir praktisch{er} zu sein[,] Roy zu dir zu schicken als zu Korsch\_. Um so mehr[,] weil ich die jetzige Stellungnahme Korsch'[s] überhaupt nicht kenne.

Mit freundschaftlichen Grüßen,

Schreib mir auch vor 27 April deine Meinung über den [der Sendung]  
<eingeschlossenen> [beigefügten]

Entwurf [für ein] Kampf-[Wahl-]Programm der R.S.P. Gewisse Aenderungen sind aufgenommen

worden in diesem Entwurf doch ich bin der Meinung dasz noch weitere Aenderungen notwendig sind. Die Agrarfrage und die Steuerfrage sind schlecht formuliert worden. Wir in der Gewerkschaftsbewegung haben eigentlich keine Möglichkeiten dazu[,] noch politische Führer einer Partei zu sein.

[..., list 74]

{Industrieverband

Weyer}

Rolf Katz

Berlin-Lichterfelde-W.\_, 23.4.29

Hortensienstr. 14/11

{af 74}

Werter Genosse Sneeveliet,

{af}

1. Ich schrieb Dir heute bereits über Roy, damit der Brief noch mit dem Mittagszug nach Amsterdam <ging>[gehen konnte].

2. Ueber Zeitung: Mir scheint Dein Vorschlag recht. Es freut mich,

dass ich Dein Schweigen falsch gedeutet hatte.<sup>118</sup> Ich glaube, dass die wichtigste zu behandelnde Frage die der Reparationen ist<.> dann englische Wahlen. Ich werde alles ganz einfach schreiben.

3. Auch ich habe sehr den Wunsch, Dich zu sehen. Ich habe sehr bedauert, dass Du nicht wie ich telegraphierte<.> von Aachen nach Frankfurt kamst.<sup>119</sup> Vielleicht ist es Dir eher möglich, mal nach Frankfurt zu kommen, ich werde ungefähr ab 15. Mai mich dort auf einige Monate aufhalten. Du könntest im Institut wohnen, so dass die Kosten nur Reise und Essen wären. Dafür könntest Du aber auch einmal gründlich mit den Leuten im Institut sprechen.

4. Ich bin gerne bereit bei Euch Vorträge zu halten. Finanziell würde ich nur Reise und etwas für die grösseren Kosten in Holland gegen Deutschland nötig haben, natürlich die geringste Summe- wie möglich. Da Du dies aber anschneidest, möchte ich, ohne aufdringlich sein zu wollen, Dir zur Ueberlegung<sup>120</sup> einen anderen Vorschlag machen, wobei ich nicht weis,

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<sup>118</sup> This is a euphemism to say the least, in a lazy and moody letter Katz had inversed the actual relation of him having promised articles and not delivered. Sneevliet's clarification meets no counter-argument on his part. Sneevliet is but too eager to oversee such immaturities of his colleague in Germany, he needs his expertise and makes him feel to be needed. With such a credit, the exchange improves remarkably. Obviously, the comrade Sneevliet has some experience in motivating people who live and work in the frustrating bonfire of vanities at home in day-to-day business of revolutionary institutions.

<sup>119</sup> It is difficult to imagine that a telegraph from Katz could be more than a proposition. The syndicalist Dutch domestic agenda of Sneevliet however did hardly allow his rare meetings abroad, let alone an excursion into Social Sciences half a day's travel from the Dutch-German frontier town of Aachen.

<sup>120</sup> The fact that Katz frequently uses international transcriptions for special German letters like Ue for Ü and ss for ß show that his situation differs from Sneevliet who has his letters written from dictando by a professional multi-lingual secretary. Katz has obviously acquired considerable practice in machine-writing on foreign machines. In the first letter preserved in the Sneevliet papers, he praises him "you already write quite good Dutch", a

wie weit dazu Möglichkeit besteht (Sprachschwierigkeiten, finanzielle Voraussetzungen, technische usw. usw.): Ich habe bisher immer die Erfahrung gemacht, dass wirksamer als einzelne Vorträge gründliche Schulung ist. Ist es nicht möglich irgendwo in billiger Gegend während der Urlaubszeit der Arbeiter, die sich auf diese einrichten wollen, eine Art von Sommer Schule zu machen, etwa 8-14 Tage, wo Ihr auch organisatorische gewerkschaftliche und politische Fragen nach vorher [ausgearbeitetem,] sorgfältige<n>[m]<sup>121</sup> Plan lehrt.

5. Ich deutete schon im meine<n>[m] 1. Schreiben an, dass Biehahn\_ seine Broschüre fertig hat. Hier wird sie vorläufig nicht gedruckt werden können. Ihr wolltet <S>[s]ie ursprünglich holländisch herausbringen. Sie ist sehr fgtut geworden<.>[:] besteht noch die Neigung bei Euch, sie herauszubringe{n}\_<sup>122</sup>? Wenn ja, dann schreibe doch gleich an ihn - Dr. Walter Biehahn, Frankfurt a.M – Heddernheim, 105 In der Römerstadt - dass er Dir das Manuskript schickt.

6. Die Lage im Verband ist mehr als ernst. Was die Verhandlungen mit dem DMV<sup>123</sup> anbelangt, um dies vorwegzunehmen, so hat weder ~~M~~Weyer noch Richard Müller noch[ ]sonst jemand aus der Zentrale verhandelt. Wohl aber w[ur]de behauptet, dass der Beezirksleiter von Berlin, Franz[ ]Müller, bereits im Oktober, vor dem Reichskongress <durch>[bei] den Vorsitzenden des Berliner Ortsausschuss des ADGB<sup>124</sup> um Verhandlungen ~~a~~nachgesucht habe.<sup>125</sup> Er bestritt dies,

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faculty you have rather little chance to acquire outside the Netherlands.

<sup>121</sup> His tendency to confuse Accusative and Dative point at a possible socialisation in Northern Germany.

<sup>122</sup> On a standard German typewriter „\_“ and „?“ are on the same key. Katz has obviously not intended to finisch the infinitive verb with an “n” which shows a tendency towards Hessian accent – as far as Frankfurt editing matters are concerned.

<sup>123</sup> Deutscher Metallarbeiter Verband, a trade-unionist formation under control of the anti-communist Social Democrat party, Sneevliet mentioned rumors that negotiations and an approach of positions could be under way.

<sup>124</sup> Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, the federation of trade union sections controlled by the Social-Democrat party.

<sup>125</sup> Grammatical consistency becomes a victim to emotions running high: there is an alleged possibility of some kind of talk between

aber Ulrich hielt auch bei einer Verhandlung vor einer Untersuchungskom[m]issi[on] des DIV<sup>126</sup> an der Behauptung fest, ebenfalls in einem Briefe.<sup>127</sup> Franz Müller sollte ihn verklagen, um vor Gericht Bredow<sup>128</sup> zu zwingen, auszusagen – Bredow scheint Müller zu decken – aber bisher ist er diesem ausgewichen.

Nun hat die Lage des Verbandes sich seit längerer Zeit ~~versehete~~[-] schlechtern. Ehe ich auf die zu Grunde liegenden Fragen eingehe, den äusseren Verlauf: Da ich Dir hier alles sage, so weit ich es selbst weiss, bitte ich Dich, dies alles vertraulich behandeln zu wollen, so zwar, dass Du Deinen enger<en> [mit Dir zusammenarbeitenden] Leuten darüber berichten kannst, aber verhüten musst, dass Dinge wieder nach Deutschland gelangen (also etwa über Euren Bauarbeitergewerkschaftlere[ Jusw.) Zwar werden diese Dinge in Laufe der Debatte in Deutschland alle genau bekannt, aber vorläufig muss ich die Vertraulichkeitsbedingung stellen. Der Verband geriet bald nach dem Reichskongress in eine schwierige Lage: Schon vorher war der Mitgliederstand zurückgegangen. [D]<d>ie ungewöhnlich lange Kälteperiode hatte einen starken Einnahmeschwund mit sich gebracht. Die Bezirke hielten mit den Geldern zurück. Hätten di[e]se [sie] alle [mit dem Zentralverband] abgerechnet, wäre die Krise im Verband nicht so gekommen, s[o] etwa 17 000.- Aussenstände, Schulden der Bezirke an die Zentrale bestehen.

Es kamen andere Dinge hinzu: Riehl hat aus dem Bezirk West-

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revolutionary and Social Democrat trade unionists, in Germany just 10 years after the Ebert-Noske treason and its 40.000 revolutionary workers executed.

<sup>126</sup> Deutscher Industrie Verband emerged 1925 because of the disobedience of a majority rebel fraction in the Communist trade unions when the ultra left secretary of the German Communist Party at that time, Ruth Fischer, decreed the organizations to dissolve and its members to join the Social Democrat organizations for an unfriendly take-over which never materialized.

<sup>127</sup> Reporting of the formal procedures to restore or question honour, Katz's language gets a definite tone more into Kanzleideutsch, the language of upper class officialdom as canonised by Göte and Schiller.

<sup>128</sup> Presumably holding the post of Vorsitzender of the local ADGB branch in Berlin.

Sachsen einen Inseratenverband gemacht. Wahrscheinlich - aber nicht nach[-]weisbar finanziell interessiert an den Inseraten - ist die Inseratensammlung seine Haupttätigkeit gewesen, bestimmen die Inserate seine ganze Politik. Die Zentrale beschloss nun, die Leipziger Beilage nicht mehr durch Leipzig sondern durch die Zentrale zu verwalten. Wir hätten damit die Kampf-Front 8seitig umsonst herausgebracht. Leipzig weigerte sich entschieden. Die Zentrale beschloss als ausserordentliche Massnahme[, ] um den Mitgliedern mit gutem Beispiel voranzugehen[, ] eine Gehaltskürzung um 25% [-] vorläufig auf 4 Wochen [-] vorzunehmen. Dies wurde nur von der Zentrale und

[page] 2 [list] 75

von Berlin, dessen Kassierer auf Seiten der Zentrale stand und steht, durchgeführt. ]Die anderen, insbesondere Leipzig weigerten sich entschieden. Schliesslich musste die Zentrale ~~fol~~[gen]> die beilieg[en]den Beschlüsse, die Du mir ~~a~~ber unbedingt umgehend zurücksenden musst, <zu> fassen, um so einen Rettungsaktion

zu unternehmen, und sie dem Beirat vorzulegen.

Die Fronde führte nun schon vorher der "prinzipielle" "moralische" W. Korschist Krebs, der Brandenburger Bezirksleiter. Zu seiner Charakterisierung nur folgendes: Nach seinen ~~A~~eigenen Angaben besteht sein Bezirk aus 217 Mitglieder[n], die fast zur Hälfte arbeitslos, die andere aber Kurzarbeiter sind. <t>[T]rotzdem hat er den äussersten Widerstand geleistet, als die Zentrale verlangte, dass bei einem solchen Stand kein [von Beitragszahlungen an den Verband] Freigestellter [mehr] zu halten sei.

Seine Abrechnung an die Zentrale deckte noch nicht einmal die Zeitungskosten für seinen Bezirk. Trotzdem deswegen schärfster Kampf, auch gegen die Kürzung von 25%.

Auf dem[r] Beirat[ssitzung] kam es zu einem offenen Eklat: Zur Charakterisierung nur

Folgendes: Der Vorsitzende des Kontrollausschusses (Leipziger!) stellte den Antrag des K.[ontroll-]A[usschusses], den Reichsleiter und Kassierer ~~a~~mbzusetzen, auf Grund der

vorgelegten Materialien gegen diese, über diese aber könnte er nicht sprechen weil er <e[s]>das Material nicht genau kenne, sondern müsse es de[n]>[m] A<nkläger über-

lassen, zu begründen! Obwohl statutenmässig verlangt wird. dass der Kontroll[-] Ausschuss dem Angeklagten das Anklageschrift zur Rückäu[sserung] übermittelt, ist dies nicht nur nicht geschehen, sondern s[owohl] Weyer wie Dahm .wussten über-

haupt nichts von diesem Verfahren, wurden[,] ohne gehört zu werden, verurteilt.

Nach den Referaten von Weyer, dem Kassierer und dem Obmann des Revisionskomitees, hielten die 3 Prinzipiellen ihre Anklagereden, Riether, hauptsächlich über die Inserate, Krebs über allerlei kleines Dreckzeug etwa 1½ Stunden, Müller (Berlin) ebenso. Keinerlei prinzipielle Gesichtspunkte [wurden vorgebracht]. Darauf, ehe

nun Diskussion [angesagt] war, verliessen sie den Raum, sprengten Beirat und werde wohl versuchen sich selbstständig zu machen. Obwohl sie wenig Mitgliedschaft

behalten werden (Müller wird etwa 10 – 15% behalten)[.] Westsachsen ist schwieriger, mit ihnen gingen die Vertreter von Baden und Mitteldeutschland, wo jedoch nicht allzuviel Mitgliedschaft [des Gesamtverbandes ansässig ist], [nichtsdestotrotz] muss man doch ganz klar erkennen, dass dies der Todesstoss für der D.I.V. ist. Innerhalb wohl von 4 Wochen wird er aufgehört haben zu existieren.

Dies der äussere Verlauf (ohne alle Details)[.] Natürlich sind es tiefere Gründe: KPD-Taktik ist wesentlich dabei. Dann aber überhaupt die veränderte Situation in Deutschland. Es scheint, dass der DIV sie – so lange halten konnte, wie das deutsche Proletariat im Angriff war, aber heute, wo so grosse Arbeitslosigkeit herrscht, wirkt das Unterstützungswesen des ADGB doch so mehr, als dass eine obgleiche wesentliche Bewegung <S>halten könnte. Dazu

war er, der Deutsche Industrie-Verband auch nicht konsolidiert genug. In Holland ist das alles ja wesentlich anders. Ich kann jetzt nicht auf alle Fragen eingehen, man muss jedoch

sehen, dass die revolutionäre Gewerkschaftsbewegung einen starken Schlag erlitten hat. Das der DIV einmal zu Grunde gegangen wäre, schien mir in den letzten Monaten sicher, diese Form [des Zusammenbruchs, die jetzt eingetreten ist], aber ist wesentlich Schuld der 3 Bezirksleiter die aus durch und durch egoistischen Motiven handeln.

Es lässt sich nicht absehen, was das [bedeutet] nun nun kommt: Dass die Herausbildung einer wirklichen revolutionären Gewerkschaftsbewegung in Deutschland damit sehr verzögert wird, ist gewiss richtig. [Un]richtig wäre es, anzunehmen, dass sie über-

haupt nicht mehr entstehen würde. Wann? Das ist [eine andere Frage.

7. Nun zu dem Kampfprogramm: Mir scheint dies wesentlich besser als das letzte. Es ist systematisch. Ich kann nicht allzuviel sagen, da ich nicht ge-

nau genug die sozialpolitischen Verhältnisse in Holland kenne, weil vieles Fingerspitzen[gefühls]sache ist, die man nur im Lande selbst beurteilen kann. Unter dieser Reserve[ ]nur Folgendes; A Bestuurswinrichting: Wäre hier nicht die Forderung nach der Republik richtig? Ferner welches <ist>[sind] die verfassungsmässigen Befugnisse der Krone? Nur dekorativ und Verbindung mi[t] dem [R]ei[c]h wie in England? Müssten nicht hier Forderungen aufgestellt werden? Welche[s sind] die Rechte des Ministeriums?

Zu D, 1: Ich kann nicht beur<te>ilen, <[n]wiefern> ob Platz für die Propaganda des 7[-]Studentages ist. [B]esteht fast überall der 8 Studentag? Ist dies eine Forderung[,] auf die die Massen reagieren werden?

Zu E, [ ]3: Nach den englischen Erfahrungen erscheint mir d[ie] ausdrückliche Hervorhebung der Spezialistenbehandlung und der Spezialbe<a>h[a]ndlung (Röntgen, Operat[i]o[n]en usw) [je] nach Erfordernis angebracht. Die Health Insurance Acts s[c]hliessen diese aus.

F, [ ]4: die „[ ]passende Arbeit[ ]“ müsste fixiert werden, als <Berufsa>[A]rbeit [ausschließlich im erlernten Beruf] oder [zumindest als] berufsähnliche [Arbeit]. Die Arbeitslosengesetzgebung, sowohl in Deutschland wie in England sieht die Uebertragung auch in andere Berufe vor, was schädlich für

[list] 76

den Arbeiter in seiner weiteren Vee[r]wendung für seinen [erlernten] Beruf sein kann (Beispiel F[ei]nmechaniker, der grobe, schwere Landarbe[i]t<sup>129</sup> machen muss und dadur[ch]

[das] Gefühl in [seinen] Fingerspitzen <sucht> [verliert, dass er zur Wiederaufnahme seines eigentlichen Berufes braucht].)

Ebenso muss [in dem Kampfprogramm eine] Massnahme enthalten sein, gegen Ausstossung aus der Versicherung wegen nicht richte[i]ger Arbeitssuche (So in England[, dort] sind etwa 40 000 [aus dem Geltungsbereich der Versicherung] entfernt worden, weil "not genuinely seeking work") Ueb[e]r Landwirtschaft werde ich Dir noch schreiben, weil ich darüber noch

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<sup>129</sup> A misspelling in German producing a Dutch word. Katz obviously thinks in Dutch and translates this back to German for his polyglot reader.



nachdenken muss.

L, 1 scheint mir [eine] sch[e]chte Formulierung mit "burgerlyke"  
Regierung, an  
alle Regierungen des heutigen – kapitalist[i]schen Holland [gerichtet], auch wenn si[e]  
aus der holländischen Sozialdemokratie gebi[ldet] wird.

Steuer: Ich würde vorschlagen: L<xxx> Abschaffung sämtlicher Steuern bis  
auf :

1. Stark progressive Einkommensteuer bei Personen und Gesellschaften
2. Stark progressive Vermögenssteuer
3. Stark progressive Erbschaftssteuer (England bis zu 60%)

Sonst bin ich mit diesem - als ungefähres W a h l programm einverstanden[.]  
Betonen würde [i]ch, dass dies nicht' <s>[S]ozialismus ist, Kampfprogramm für  
so<i>z[i]ale

Reformen i n n e r h a l b der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft, das müsste aber  
auch ausdrücklich [im Text] f< >estgest[e]llt werd[e]n.

Mit besten Gruss

[signature] Rudolf Katz

[..., list 87ob]

Heigenbrücken<sup>130</sup>

[list 87]

87

Holland!

[stamp] C 972 [round postal stamp unreadable because the stamp has been  
removed]

Herrn

H. Sneevliet

Amsterdam

101 Nassaukade

[printed – modern types, postcard editor:] C. Samhaber, Aschaffenburg  
25.V.29

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<sup>130</sup> Written in modern Western handwriting, not in the German  
gothic handwriting still taught at school in 1929\_, obviously the  
little hamlet has ambitious plans and counts on foreign visitors,  
writing postcards on which people abroad will read, desiring very  
much to be able to read their trade mark name.

[printed – modern types] Heigenbrücken im Spessart  
L[iebe]r. H.[enk]

Ich habe hier einige Tage ausgespannt.

Ab 27.V. bin ich in F[rank]f[urt am M]<m>ain, von wo  
aus ich den Artikel für „Nie[u]we Weg“

Schicken werde.

Meine neue Adresse ist:

R. Katz

Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung

Frankfurt a[m ]M[ain]

17 Viktoria Allee

Telegram[m]e: Sozialforschung für Katz

Frankfurt[ a]m[ M]ain.<sup>131</sup>

Ich hoffe sehr, dass die Sache R.[oy]

gut läuft. Ich habe getan, was ich

konnte. Bitte schicke Mai-Nummer

& laufend auch ab Mai De Arbeit

an obige Adresse & schreib mir über Wahlen.

Mit DIV bin ich fertig. Herzl.[ich], auch T.S.RH.-R.

R[olf]'

`1st letter: Henk Sneevliet to Rolf Katz ^

21<sup>st</sup> April 1929 Rolf Katz,

Hortensienst. 14/II

BERLIN LICHTENFELDE W.

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<sup>131</sup> Payment for telegrams, as might not be part of the life-experience of younger readers any more, are to be paid according to the amount of words. The fact that the mere key word “social investigation” without any further address was sufficient for the metropolitan post to single out the Institute of Horkheimer and Adorno tells about the standing of the institution in the urban day-to-day communication.

Worthy comrade,

I do not understand at all the conclusion of your letter from 27th March. I mean, that we would have rather more reason to complain about the fact that we hear so little of you actually than the other way round. Particularly your promises<sup>132</sup> for our monthly review were actually never<sup>133</sup> realised. The political discussion of international events never took place after one more theoretical article by you on international policy. You have made several proposals regarding this project. Nevertheless, these proposals, of course also because of your temporary illness, were not put to practice by you. Of course, we effected the translation your last contribution on tendencies of development in Germany. This translation will be published in the May edition of the magazine. Since January, the comrade Roland<sup>134</sup> delivers a short monthly chronicle of highlights, a kind of review. But to my mind this has by no way made a regular contribution of yours superfluous treating international politics. On the contrary! Several questions could be excellently treated by you in the monthly review. I will indicate some examples. Information about the reparation

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<sup>132</sup> Speaking about Rolf's proposals, Sneevliet uses a very formal administrative term in German, applicable only to a proposal in a highly official meeting. Obviously, Sneevlieth has suffered a predominantly administrative trade union socialisation in German language with little time to learn what words Germans use when they are not addressing a constitutive body of representation. But the formal correctness of his German wording and his jolly Dutch disrespect for habitual German status hierarchy does the trick, transforming the bored Katz, inventing reproaches in the letter before, into a most operative networker across the artificial national borders subdividing working-class interest on the old continent.

<sup>133</sup> The hand correction of his secretaries dictando was unnecessary, the expression made more sense before Henk going over it.

<sup>134</sup> Roland Holst

payment issue<sup>135</sup> is highly desirable. The tactics of the Russians regarding disarmament, once, the cooperation of the Russians, Turks and Germans should be discussed soon. Questions of the American policy, contrasts between England and America, the last arrangements in British India, Italian-English the negotiations<sup>136</sup> could be discussed. For you, who publishes his articles in his maternal language, it is not at all difficult to do something regularly. From „The Fighting Front“<sup>137</sup> and from a letter by Weyer<sup>138</sup> I got the impression that the business of the D.I.V.<sup>139</sup> does not do shiningly well. Perhaps now, you have somewhat got more time with „The Fighting Front “ having become such a small size paper. Anyhow, it is of the greatest importance for me, that you will provide a contribution from 7 to 8 sides for our monthly review, to be sent in before last Saturday each month. Please, mind the fact, that you should formulate your articles in such a style, that N.A.S.<sup>140</sup> workers invoice on the fact that you write your articles in such way that the N.A.S. workers, who get the monthly review, can understand it. You should really remember, that in the field of intellectual development, our first priority task is to fight against political ignorance among

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<sup>136</sup> -

<sup>137</sup> „die Kampffront“ was the publishing organ of the Federation of independent revolutionary Trade Unions, DIV (Deutscher Industrie Verband)

<sup>138</sup> Weyer was the general secretary of this federation to be ousted in the forthcoming weeks in the process of the federation's financial and social collapse.

<sup>139</sup> DIV (Deutscher Industrie Verband) was the Federation of independent revolutionary Trade Unions from its split with Comintern in 1925 until its liquidation around 1929/1930

<sup>140</sup> NAS

the group of 17.000 N.A.S. workers and provide for their political training.

It would be very necessary that we could meet each other in the very near future. I mean, that next winter, you could hold some lectures on important economic questions here in Amsterdam. We could discuss this plan. Anyhow, before October a discussion will be possible.<sup>141</sup>

The last messages Weyers have caused me a certain unrest, regarding conditions in the weak revolutionary trade union movement of Germany. On the one side, strong communist influence by the make-believe-radicalism of Stalin.<sup>142</sup> On the other side, [formerly communist] Czechoslovakian trade union leaders are shifting their orientation towards the Amsterdam International<sup>143</sup>. For itself of course, the break of

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<sup>141</sup> It is not quite clear from Sneevliet's German grammar whether he wants to urge Katz to seek a meeting before October or whether he announces that his tight agenda will allow HIM to attend a meeting of the two before that date. As often with non-native speakers putting down their thoughts in a foreign language, everything which has not been thought over thoroughly betrays its contradictions instantly. Disguise (French dressing) is less alert outside our mother tongue.

<sup>142</sup> The Comintern third period makes itself felt both in the Netherlands and Germany with slogans superficially taking up the issues of DIV in 1925 when the 2<sup>nd</sup> period Comintern politics tried in vain to surrender its members to the virtually corporatist Social Democrat unions.

<sup>143</sup> The Amsterdam International was the direct counterpart of the Red Trade Union International in Moscow, yet from the beginning, at least nominally, both tried to unite with high priority. In a certain way, Profintern was created as a step towards the Amsterdam competition to make entry possible for national leagues which would not enter the Comintern. The appointment of Andres Nin

discipline towards the Muscovites is actually good. But their right-wing stance can effect a further weakening of the revolutionary trade union movement, not only in Czechoslovakia, but also in Germany. In the newspaper [by] Brandler\_, there is a communication the Weyer-organisation is on the way to conduct negotiations with the social-democratic metal workers union.<sup>144</sup> If that is correct, the very near future for the German movement looks very unfortunate. I have always been upset that the D.I.V. did not engage in sharp polemics against the social-democratic movement. In this regard Schumacher\_ was better.<sup>145</sup> You should communicate to me your your opinion openly and without reserve. Anyway, I will write to Weyer about his last letter, but it is of significance for me to get to know your judgment of the current situation.

Finally, a point which is important. Roy\_ has an independent political standpoint, he is based in Berlin, writes some books. A book concerning the Chinese Revolution\_, in which the question of the nationalistic liberation movement of the colonized people is treated in principle, is finished. A second book will have the title: „Problems of the British Empire “\_. In this book he deals with imperialism. In a third book he analyses the current situation of the movement in British India. He is actually quite isolated by the illegality of his existence, though he has been in Europe for a long time. As he is the best Marxist among the revolutionaries of colour,

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from the Spanish CNT (which already at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Comintern congress wanted to participate only as an observer) as deputy secretary of Profintern is enigmatic of this strategy, comp. Tosstorf Profintern.

#  
<sup>144</sup> The Metallarbeiterverband, closely allied tot he Social Democratic Party of Germany, SPD.

<sup>145</sup> Construction worker federation

the moment had to come for his intellectual liberation from Moscow. No publishing house of the Comintern will edit his books. I have immediately thought about the Frankfurt institute. He is my personal friend since the 2nd congress of the Comintern. I would attach a great importance to helping him, even if it is just as a mediator for him. I already wrote to him that he should contact you. As I am not sure about your opinion regarding this issue, I told him to wait until the first week of May. Please, be so kind as to inform me at once whether you are ready to bring Roy in contact with the responsible persons in Frankfurt. In case you are of the opinion that he would better go to another publishing house you will surely be useful for him in this respect as well. I am awaiting your answer with suspense. It seems to me more practical to send Roy to you than to Korsch<sup>146</sup>. Much the more so, because I do not know the current position of Korsch at all.

With friendly greetings,

Also before 27<sup>th</sup> April write to me your opinion about the attached draft for a combat election program of the R.S.P. Certain amendments were picked up for this draft, nevertheless I am of the opinion that still further amendments are necessary. The agricultural question and the fiscal question were formulated badly. Truly, we in the trade union movement have actually no possibilities for being in addition to everything political leaders of a party.

*2nd letter: Rolf Katz to Henk Sneevliet* trade association  
Weyer Rolf Katz

2<sup>nd</sup> letter, Rolf Katz to Henk Sneevliet:

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<sup>146</sup> \_# Karl Korsch

Berlin Lichterfelde-W., 23.4.29  
Hortensienst. 14/11

Worthy Comrade Sneevliet,<sup>147</sup>

1. Today, I already wrote you about Roy, so that the letter could go to Amsterdam with the midday train already.

2. About the newspaper: your proposal seems fair to me. It makes me happy that I had wrongly interpreted your silence.

<sup>148</sup> I believe that the most important question which were to be treated is the of the reparations then English elections. I will write it all very simply.

3. Equally, I have very much so the desire to see you. I regretted very much that you did not come from Aachen to

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<sup>147</sup> The fact that Katz frequently uses international transcriptions for special German letters like Ue for Ü and ss for ß show that his situation differs from Sneevliet who has his letters written from dictando by a professional multi-lingual secretary. Katz has obviously acquired considerable practice in machine-writing on foreign machines. In the first letter preserved in the Sneevliet papers, he praises him "you already write quite good Dutch", a faculty any averagely gifted learners have rather little chance to acquire outside the Netherlands.

<sup>148</sup> This is a euphemism to say the least, in a lazy and moody letter Katz had inversed the actual relation of him having promised articles and not delivered. Sneevliet's clarification meets no counter-argument on his part. Sneevliet is but too eager to oversee such immaturities of his colleague in Germany, he needs his expertise and makes him feel to be needed. With such a credit, the exchange improves remarkably. Obviously, the comrade Sneevliet has some experience in motivating people who live and work in the frustrating bonfire of vanities at home in day-to-day business of revolutionary institutions.



Frankfurt, as I telegraphed you.<sup>149</sup> Perhaps, it is rather possible for you to eventually come to Frankfurt. Starting about from 15<sup>th</sup> May onwards, I will spend some months there.<sup>150</sup> You could live in Institute,<sup>151</sup> so that the costs would

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149 It is difficult to imagine that a telegraph from Katz could be more than a proposition. The syndicalist Dutch domestic agenda of Sneevliet however did hardly allow his rare meetings abroad, let alone an excursion into Social Sciences half a day's travel from the Dutch-German frontier town of Aachen.

<sup>150</sup> Rolf does not seem to know that he will irretrievably lose his job in the revolutionary trade unions in Berlin within a few weeks.

<sup>151</sup> This proposal is somewhat out of place. On business trips the General Secretary Sneevliet uses to reside in middle lower price pensions. His appointments to sleep in the flat of a female comrade in Berlin in the forthcoming year are of a strictly private and sentimental character. Anyway, she later writes to Amsterdam, that she had missed him that night, when he preferred to sleep in his hotel after all.

Katz is somewhat of a different generation, more practical. The arrangement which is important to organize for his own life (a preliminary place for living during his internship in the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research) he is ready to share with his comrade. Yet in the 18 years, Sneevlieth works in Europe between his return from China and his execution it is clearly out of the question for him to "live" in another place because there are interesting comrades and contacts. He lives in Amsterdam, apparently quite separate from the mother of his two children (their successive suicides will happen later) and goes on very quick business trips abroad (Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Barcelona and Prague or Dutch provincial destinations combined with neighbouring German towns of importance for revolutionary trade union co-operation, such as Aachen, Mönchengladbach and Düsseldorf), preparing every meeting as far as his secretary can tackle the considerable type-writing task with a written correspondence beforehand, proposing a time window, a bar, private flat or office and usually a default alternative date.

be only journey and meals. In that case, you could once really speak thoroughly with the people in Institute.

4. I am ready and would be glad to give lectures for you. Financially, I would need only the journey and the difference of living costs, being higher in Holland than in Germany, of course the smallest sums as possible.<sup>152</sup> Since you have started this topic, however, I would like, without wanting to appear importunate, to submit another proposal to your consideration, whereby I do not know, in how far in such possibilities do exist (language problems, financial conditions, technical etc. ): I have so far always made the experience that thorough training proves much more effective than individual lectures. It is not possible during the vacation period of the workers, somewhere in a cheap area, to make a kind of summer school for about 8-14 days for all those [workers] who want to accustom themselves to such an idea. In such a school you could intervene as well on organizational and political questions of unionising, teaching according to a previously well-prepared plan.<sup>153</sup>

5. I suggested already in my 1st letter that Biehahn<sup>154</sup> has finished his brochure. For the time being, it could not be printed here. Originally, you wanted to publish it in Dutch. It

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<sup>152</sup> "as possible" has been added to the sentence when the full stop was already there. Probably, Katz started to feel a bit awkward about his own generosity before turning to the next sentence. In the following, he is consciously exploring a border-line. With the delicacy of walking on a tight-rope, he precludes criticism from his Dutch colleague, stressing that he does not want to be a nuisance with his proposals, propelling costs to be covered for him.

<sup>153</sup> His tendency to confuse *accusative* and *dative* point at a possible socialisation in Northern Germany.

<sup>154</sup> Dr. Walter Biehahn \_#

has turned out to be very good. Do you still tend to publish it?<sup>155</sup> If yes, then why not writing directly to him - Dr. Walter Biehahn, Frankfurt A.M. - Heddernheim, 105 in the Roman city – so he sends you the manuscript.

6. The situation in the federation is more than serious. Anticipating to deal with this in the first place, I have to tell you on negotiations with DMV<sup>156</sup> that neither Weyer nor Richard Müller or anyone else from the headquarter has conducted any negotiations whatsoever. However, [Urich] has spread the rumour that as far back as October, i.e. before the nationwide congress, Franz Mueller from the Berlin regional branch had requested to negotiate through [Bredow], the chairman of ADGB<sup>157</sup> Berlin local committee.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> This might illustrate, why the transcription character by character including all mistyping and later insertions can be a source of historical knowledge. At this point of the German typescript, we have an interesting constellation of mistypings, pointing to a much more significant cause than just untrained fingering: on a standard German typewriter „\_“ and „?“ are on the same key. Katz has obviously not intended to finish the infinitive verb with an “n” which shows a tendency towards Hessian accent – as far as Frankfurt editing matters are concerned.

<sup>156</sup> Deutscher Metallarbeiter Verband, a trade-unionist formation under control of the anti-communist Social Democrat party, Sneevliet mentioned rumors that negotiations and an approach of positions could be under way.

<sup>157</sup> AGDB Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, the German General Trade Union, the predecessor of today's DGB, which had a clear Social-Democrat party affiliation in the interwar period until its liquidation 1933.

<sup>158</sup> Grammatical consistency becomes a victim to emotions running high: there is an alleged possibility of some kind of talk between revolutionary and Social Democrat trade unionists, in Germany just

Bredow denied this, but Urich held on to his version even in front of an inquiry commission set up by the revolutionary trade union federation, DIV, and likewise in a letter.<sup>159</sup> [It is now being proposed to] Franz Mueller to sue [Bredow] in court to force him to tell [the truth, i.e. that there is no real basis for implying Franz Mueller in the rumour]. Bredow seems to cover Müller – but until now [Müller] has avoided to confront him.

Now, the situation of the federation has been worsening over a long time. Before I deal with the underlying questions, I will refer to you the visible process: Since here I say everything to you without reserve, as far as I know it myself, I would ask you to treat all of this confidentially, that means, you can inform your closer colleagues about it, but you have to prevent, that things [I tell you] get back to Germany (e.g. through your building trade union activist or something of that sort). Of course these things will become known in Germany in detail in the course of further debate, but for the time being I have to oblige you to treat this as confidential. Soon after the nationwide congress, the federation lapsed into a difficult situation: even before membership affiliation had been going down. The unusually long period of cold weather caused a strong decline in [membership fee] income. The regional branch offices did not forward their income to the headquarters [as they should have done]. If the regional branch offices had all accounted correctly in relation to the headquarter the crisis would not have affected the federation

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10 years after the Ebert-Noske treason and its 40.000 revolutionary workers executed.

159 Reporting of the formal procedures to restore or question honour, Katz's language gets a definite tone more into Kanzleideutsch, the language of upper class officialdom as canonised by Göte and Schiller.

as it actually did in the end, about 17.000,- of unpaid obligations, regional branches indebted to the headquarter. Additionally, there were other unfavourable developments: Riehl has turned the Western Saxonian branch into an advertisement agency. Probably, he has profited personally dealing advertisement space, but this cannot be proven. At any rate, acquiring advertisements had been his main activity, marketing advertisement space determined all his politics.<sup>160</sup> Therefore, the headquarter decided to take over the management of the Leipzig supplement [to the revolutionary trade union paper “Kampffront”] from the Leipzig branch office on the headquarter’s accounts.<sup>161</sup> [With the

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<sup>160</sup> Nonetheless, after the breakaway of Riehl’s powerfull Leipzig branch in the following months, Sneevliet decides to stop over for a short conversation with Riehl before continuing to the Czechoslovak Capital Prague for a New Year’s conference on the Czech Red Trade Union rebellion against Moscow directives, beginning 30<sup>th</sup> December 1929.

<sup>161</sup> The speculation bubble in the advertisement sector is due to the specific nature of the 1929/1930 economic crisis in Germany. Quite in coherence with Neoliberal doctrine, the crisis management of the conservative government followed a anti-inflationary monetary policy regardless of its social price. As a consequence the Goldmark-standard provoked a historic deflation with Goldmark prices going down but goods not finding buyers. In such a climate, commercial promotion, i.e. incitation to consumption above the real material possibilities of worling-class buyers promised profits above the average. The commercial entities in the Leipzig region had obviously no problem to thus finance an openly revolutionary newspaper alongside with getting their advertisements into working-class homes. So the “Kampffront” simultaneously incited workers to expropriate capital in the editorial part and to overstretch their consumer credit in the advertisements next to it. The personality of Riehl however seems central to this thrilling deal, for other branches would by far not cash in such a dividend on trade union publishing.

advertisement income from the Leipzig region alone,] we could have published “the fighting front” with a volume of 8 pages [for the whole of the country] w i t h o u t needing to cash in anything on sales. Leipzig was strictly opposed to such a solution. The headquarter thus decided for a an extraordinary measure, in order to go ahead of the members with good example, to reduce its salaries by 25% - for 4 weeks provisionally. Only the headquarter accomplished this task and the Berlin branch office whose cashier has been with the headquarters and continues to do so. The others, in particular Leipzig branch office, decidedly refused to do so as well. Finally the headquarter was obliged to issue the decisions you find in the attachment of this letter, which you must return to me at all costs. These decisions amounted to a rescue initiative and were presented to the board of advisors. Even before, the characteristic petty struggling with a high profile was lead by the Korsch<sup>162</sup>-follower Krebs, the head of the Brandenburg regional branch office. Just this to characterise him: if we believe his own words, he has 217

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<sup>162</sup> In 1926, as a Comunist party renegade, the scientific Marxist Karl Korsch formed one of the 7 or more competing tendencies of opposition to the Comintern in the German left. If the contact person for Trotsky Urbahn cared to be most close to working-class language, often on the brink of populism, Karl Korsch was serving the other extreme with followers rather in the educated classes with in some cases a slightly sentimental rather than class interest in revolution. Accordingly, he managed to escape to the United States, teaching academic Marxism there during the war. On escaping the German death-trap to the BeNeLux countries at first, he left his intimate young associate Patras behind, who was subsequently interned in a German concentration camp. Urbahns, escaping to Sweden, first saw to it that his young associate Jonny gets out, then followed him within a month, a time of terrible suspense for Sneevlieth waiting for correspondence from all of them.

members, of which almost one half is out of work, the others are on short time, ie. reduced working hours and minimal pay. In spite of this, he mounted extreme resistance when the headquarter demanded of him [to make his regional members pay member fees] because under the present state of affairs the federation cannot allow itself to exempt members from paying their fees. The payments [Krebs] forwarded to the headquarters were not even covering the costs for the newspapers going to his region. In spite of that the most ferocious fight, also against the reduction [of his own pay] by 25%.

During the the meeting of the board of advisers an open scandal exploded: to characterise just this: the chairman of the controlling commission (from the Leipzig branch!) formally filed the proposal of the controlling commission to impeach the nationwide chairmen [Weyer] and his cashier [Dahm] on the basis of the written documentation presented against them. However, he stated that he could not talk about these papers because he did not know them exactly, instead [he stated that] he had to leave it to the accuser to furnish reasons! Though the [federation's] written statutes require that the controlling commission issues a written indictment to the accused to allow her or him to answer back [on the points of the accusation] this did not happen, neither Weyer nor Dahm knew anything about the [impeachment] procedures. They were put on trial and condemned without [being given a chance to] saying anything.

After the presentation of papers by [chairman] Weyer, the cashier [Dahm] and the chairman of the examiners [from the Leipzig regional branch], the three principled ones made their accusation speeches, Riehl, mainly on the advertisements, Krebs [from the regional branch office of Brandenburg] talked for one and a half hours about all kinds of petty dirty

things,<sup>163</sup> Mueller (Berlin) likewise. No criteria of principle were voiced. Subsequently, before now discussion was announced [to start], they left the room, blew up the advisory commission and will probably try to make themselves independent. Though, they will keep little membership (Mueller will keep about 10 - 15%). Western Saxony is more difficult, together with them the representatives from Baden and Central Germany [Thuringia, Southern Saxony-Anhalt], where however there is not too much membership of the general association. Nonetheless, one must recognise clearly, that overall, this is the mortal blow for D.I.V. Within probably 4 weeks it will have ceased to exist.<sup>164</sup> This is the facade of

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<sup>163</sup> „Krebs über allerlei klei[n]es Dreckzeug etwa 1½ Stunden“, this sentence more than any other characterises the heart and soul of German council proceedings, as it seems, nothing short of ingeniously. “Let’s do it the German style,” said three woman activists from Scandinavia, Britain and California in our Rostock convergence centre preparing action against G8 2007 in a mood of mocking viciously and sat down to discuss how to wipe the floor and how dirty it was indeed. After half a minute they could not stand the realist quality of their joke any more and jumped up to get the work done, laughing with an uncanny and somewhat frightened easiness.

<sup>164</sup> Though this estimate by Katz is correct as to the ability to ignite industrial conflict, the genuine task the revolutionary trade unions had set for themselves on their foundation in 1925, nevertheless, the administrative death of the disintegrating and now competing regional branches worked on, entrenched in bitter conflict and competition among themselves until well into the year 1930. The independent nationwide branches of building, textile and retail workers however continued industrial action and militancy throughout the peak of the economic crisis with the strategic aim of a revolutionary of fermenting broader anti-Capitalist and anti-Fascist militancy. They strictly stuck to their principle to realize the union in action of all trade unions (Social Democrat, Christian, i.e. yellow ones, and the one newly set up by Comintern-Profintern in



the development (without any details). Of course, the genuine reasons lie deeper. [Adversary] German Communist Party (KPD) tactics have a substantial share of them. Additionally, there is the changed situation in Germany. It seems that the DIV they could hold on, as long as the German proletariat was in the offensive, attacking<sup>165</sup> but nowadays, when unemployment prevails on such a scale, the offers of material support [for the jobless] by [the reformist, pro-capitalist trade union] ADGB. Even a substantial [revolutionary] movement cannot withstand [under such

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German) at the local on strike exclusively. They inherited the task of cultivating internationalist ties from the disfunctionalised centre, so in the Sneevliet collection, we find protocols of several hundred pages of the proceedings of building, textile and retail workers trade union conferences, some of which Sneevliet managed to attend, referring on international solidarity. The point of disillusionment came to Sneevliet when his own Dutch union NAS came into financial trouble. Needing to buy housing property for the continuation of a workers' self-organised provision logistics on unionised Dutch ships he failed to retrieve a proportion of the preceeding Dutch strike solidarity payments to Germany from his comrades across the border. For the Germany material revolutionary solidarity was fine as long as they remained its beneficiary. Only a few years later, NAS was to help German comrades on another scale, saving the lives of many German cross-border industrial activists when they were sought by Nazi political police.

<sup>165</sup> This sounds like an anti-Gramscian point of analysis: so it was dynamic attack and not entrenched position warfare which inspired the material German possibility to become an anti-Capitalist focus in global class war, as the colleagues of Rolf Katz, Horkheimer and Adorno continued to expect until about the year 1936. If we stick to the Gramscian concept nonetheless, we may be forced to admit that Germany [and Austria] were socially, culturaly and administratively closer to Russia than any other region in Central Europe, including Italy.

circumstances]. For that [challenge], the federation was neither financially nor administratively prepared. In Holland, all this is quite different, as a matter of course. I cannot to deal here and now with all the questions [involved], but one must admit that the revolutionary trade union movement has received a strong blow. During the last months, I had no doubt that the DIV would perish one day, but the form of collapse it took now, has been caused substantially by the 3 regional branch chairmen who acted thoroughly for egoistic motives.

It is difficult to foresee what comes now: the development of a real revolutionary trade union movement in Germany is actually being retarded very much by this. But it would be wrong to assume that it is not on the agenda any more. When? That is another question

7. Now about [your] combat program: To me this seems substantially better than the previous one. It is systematic. I cannot say too much, since I do not know exactly enough the social-political conditions in Holland, because much of it is a matter of intuitive feeling, which you can judge only in the country itself. Given this reservation, only following: on “the governing board direction”<sup>166</sup>: wouldn't it be correct to demand the Republic at this point? Furthermore, which are the constitutional powers of the crown? Only decoratively and the connexion with the Empire as in England? Isn't it necessary to set up demands at this point? What is the role of the ministry?

On D, 1: I cannot judge whether there is space to propagate the 7-hours workday. Is the 8-hours workday established nearly everywhere? Is this a demand to which the masses will react?

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<sup>166</sup> Citation by Katz in Dutch language;

On E, 3: After the English experiences, to me it seems that it is appropriate to demand with expressive emphasis [the right] to receive special treatment (x-ray, operations, etc.) [on workers's health insurance] it this is [only] necessary. The [British] Health Insurance Acts are excluding these.

F, 4: „suitable work”<sup>167</sup> would have to be defined precisely and in a fixed manner, as work exclusively in the learnt occupation or at most in an occupation similar to the one [she or he] was trained for. Both in Germany and in England, unemployed benefit laws envisages the transmission [of unemployed skilled workers] to other profession as well, which can be harmful for keeping up the specialised profile (e.g. of a precision mechanic who is forced to perform mean, heavy agricultural work<sup>168</sup> and thus [looses] the feeling in the tips of his fingers which he searches [to retain].)

Likewise, a measure must be included against dismissing from [unemployment] insurance because of “not genuinely seeking work”<sup>169</sup> (the reason why 40 000 have been expelled in England)

About agriculture I will write to you later on, because I still have to think about that one.

L, 1 it seems bad wording [to write] “bourgeois”<sup>170</sup> government, meaning all governments of today's - capitalistic Holland, even if they are formed with the participation of the Dutch Social Democratic movement.

Taxes: I would propose: <xxx> abolishment of all taxes except for:

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<sup>167</sup> Expression by Katz in German language;

<sup>168</sup> A misspelling in German producing a Dutch word. Katz obviously thinks in Dutch and translates this back to German for his polyglot reader.

<sup>169</sup> Citation by Katz in British English;

<sup>170</sup> Citation by Katz in Dutch language

1.strongly progressive income tax in the case of persons and companies

2.strongly progressive wealth tax

3.strongly progressive death duty (England up to 60%)

Otherwise, I do agree with this - as an approximate E l e c t i o n-program. Though, I would stress that this is not socialism<sup>171</sup>, a fighting programm for social reforms i n s i d e capitalist society, but this has to be pointed out expressively.

With best greeting [signature] Rudolf Katz

*3rd communication, postcard: from Rof Katz ton of Henk Sneevliet*

Heigenbrücken <sup>172</sup>1

Holland!

[stamped] C 972

[round postal stamp sign unreadable because the stamp itself has been removed]

Mr.

H. Sneevliet

Amsterdam

101 Nassaukade

[printed – vertically, in modern types, postcard editor:] C.

Samhaber, Aschaffenburg

25.V.29

[printed - modern type:] Holy bridges in the Spessart

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<sup>171</sup> Contrary to German grammer rules, Katz choses not to write socialism with a capital letter, making it rather look like a German verb.

<sup>172</sup> Printed in modern, i.e. non-gothic types imitating foreign hand-writing of that time;

D[ear] H[enk]

I spend some days relaxing here. Starting from 27<sup>th</sup> April I am in Frankfurt/Main, from where I will send the article for „New Way“<sup>173</sup>.

My new address is:

R. Katz  
Society for Social Research  
Frankfurt/Main  
17 Victoria avenue

for telegrams: Social Research for Katz Frankfurt/Main.<sup>174</sup> I hope very much that the project Roy develops well. I have contributed as much as I could. Please send me the May issue of “The Work”<sup>175</sup> and following [issues] also after May to the address mentioned above and write me about elections<sup>176</sup>. With DIV I am finished up. Cordially, also T.S.RH. - R. R[olf]'

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<sup>173</sup> To say it more clearly: once more, Rolf Katz has failed to meet the deadline for his monthly contribution in the Netherlands, he had accepted in the previous letter.

<sup>174</sup> Payment for telegrams, as might not be part of the life-experience of younger readers any more, are to be paid according to the amount of words. The fact that the mere key word “social investigation” without any further address was sufficient for the metropolitan post to single out the Institute of Horkheimer and Adorno tells about the standing of the institution in the urban day-to-day communication.

<sup>175</sup> Katz mentions the title of the Dutch journal edited by Sneevliet in Dutch language.

<sup>176</sup> Sneevliet's candidature for parliament was unsuccessful that year but successful in 1933, following a mass left turn of popular support in the Netherlands due to the rise of Fascism in neighbouring Germany and more domestically after the

5<sup>th</sup> sample: Correspondence by Karel Svoboda about his comrade Karel Fišer Michalec

So, we come to the last and probably most controversial sample of correspondence. Michalec was such an out-spoken trainee of Zinoviev, that even the label gun of Pierre Bouré points at him correctly: he himself admitted to be a Zinovievist, repeatedly before official party organs, e.g. in 1927 and 1957. He never meant by that the capitulationist stance of his teacher comrade after 1926, though Czech political policing chooses to file his self-evidence that way in order to be able to leave this curiously surviving friend of Slansky where he was. Michalec was passionate about inner-party democracy, which he had experienced personally as a vital force of class-based organising in the Early Soviet Republics.

In 1927, he wrote a stunning report on Czech Communist party power machinations, which he was not preventing from reaching the post-Zinoviev COMintern discussion, to the contrary. He knew what heritage he was fighting for and he was ready to fall for it, to the difference of Zinoviev himself. His party exclusion of 1927 thus proved, one of the first to be

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revolutionary mutiny on a Dutch warship in Indonesian waters ("7 provinces" - the Dutch "pancernik Potemkin", unfortunately imperialist armies worldwide had learnt from the 1905 Black Sea incident and were better prepared to kill off the spark of upheaval in time), its bombing by the Dutch air force and Henk's prison sentence due to his solidarity with the revolutionary mariners killed in this uprising.

enacted in the Chechoslovak Comintern branch for “fractionism” and was well-known in 1945 as our document shows clearly. However, in this year, something strange was happening, that neither Nin, nor Serge had foreseen. In the Czech capital, liberation from Fascism was carried out according to the doctrine of bottom-up popular resistance without the direct assistance of the Soviet Army. The barricades of Prague in may 1945 were the point of return for Michalec to the agency of open circles he knew from the Communist Youth International and the Early Comintern. Workers’ self-management, independent trade-union militancy, open polarisation with Social Democrat right wing-interest in the very work-places, not in trials and autodafé, this was Karols second political youth and he thrived in it, ignoring all the later acquisitions of Czech party culture, such as to fight Social Democrat interest in a covered and backstabbing manner. Karol was at home in the thriving working-class public life of the first years after shaking off Fascist rule. Characteristically, his party membership as filed in summer 1945 was never revoked. After a prominent denunciation against him on the basis of his 1927 stance<sup>177</sup> in October 1949, the verification commission of his Ministry of External Affairs, administering the film business he had taken to co-ordinate on a national scale, chose to push him out of work and just ignore his party membership as it had never existed. He never refrained from appealing to this strange and

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<sup>177</sup> Popped up artificiall with what Rolf katz chose to call “über allerlei klei[n]es Dreckzeug etwa 1½ Stunden” (RGASPI, Mosscow, f522, 2- 12: 75) exactly 20 years earlier: presumptions on his wife, his club life, etc.

inconsistent decision, so his personal file in the surveillance work of political police swells right into the 1980s. The following document epitomizes why it was so difficult to eliminate Karel Michalec out of Czech public life in spite of all orthodox party interest in doing so: to the difference of many other Eastern European cityscapes their power was based on what was 1945 a genuine popular movement. Proceeding against Michalec faculties of swimming like a Early Soviet fish in late Stalin-sominated waters, would have meant to hollow the very base of working-class power in Prague and thus party supremacy. It needed much more contest than that until such work was begun in 1968 and finished in 1989. Nin's last letter and his tragic death were neither an end, nor a beginning, they were – no matter how much we would like it to be otherwise – just an episode in the material conflicts over class hegemony worldwide, transcending the boundaries of language, age, gender and – curiously enough -centuries.

(see reproduction 511 transcribed character by character<sup>178</sup> and translated into British English<sup>179</sup> underneath)

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<sup>178</sup> by the author, kindly proof-read by Eva Murtinová, Prague.

<sup>179</sup> by the author, kindly proof-read by Eva Murtinová, Prague.



992

Prague dne 9. května 1990.

**EDNOTA**

Tit.  
Ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu  
oddělení kádrové prověřovací,  
Třída politických věšáků 20,  
P r a h a II.

Válení soudruzi,

k vašemu dopisu č.j. K/3 PO z 9.5.t.r. oznamuji :

Ačkoliv jsem podepisoval spoudruhu Karlu Pišerovi přihlášku do strany, znal jsem ho celkem málo. Osmatují se, že nastoupil asi v r. 1934 nebo 1936 do bývalého Práva lidu jako administrativní číedník. Byl jsem v té době zaměstnán v tehdejší Právu lidu jako strojní samos, ale nepišel jsem s ním do styku. Oznal jsem jej až v roce 1945 v revoluci.

Tehdy jsem byl předsedou Revoluční závodní rady Práva lidu. Vzpomínám si, že se soudruh Pišer činně zúčastnil všech prací, spojených s vydáváním prvního svobodného Rudého práva a Práce ( zachycování a uveřejňování zpráv zahraničního rozhlasu atd.) Dnes po revoluci ( myslím asi kolem 15. května 1945 ) odešel soudr. Pišer do Vydavatelstva Práce, takže jsem s ním na krátkou dobu stratil styk. Teprve, když jsem 1. srpna 1945 nastoupil do slouso Vydavatelstva Práce, posádal me soudr. Pišer o podpis na přihlášce do strany. Pamatuji se trochu z historie strany, kdo to byl soudruh Pišer ( Michalec ). Myslí, že byl asi v r. 1934 nebo 25 vyloučen ze strany, kde býval vysokým funkcionářem mládeže ( krajským nebo dokonce výšším tajemníkem ).

Přesto jsem tehdy po květnu 1945, když jsem viděl masový nábor do strany a zároveň to, že jsou přijímáni i bývalí členové, kteří vystoupili z manifestem proti straně ( spisovatelé ), myslili, že je vše v pořádku a že event. difference z minulosti, si soudruh Pišer vyřídí a vedením strany sám.

Jako odborník byl vynášených kvalit. V závodě zastával funkci ředitele administrace a tajemníka náředního ředitelství. Pracoval aktivně ve výboru Závodní organizace, avšak proti jeho způsobu jednání ( vícemálo nářisovací způsob ), byly námítky i z řad členů strany. Toho využil tehdejší pravicevé vedení zaměstnaneckých orgánů a zorganizovalo proti němu akci, která skončila v červenci nebo srpnu 1946, odvoláním soudr. Pišera ze závodu.

Nelze mu nic vytýkat pokud jde o dodržování linie strany, avšak způsob, jakým to činil, odrazoval od něho lidi.

O jeho manželce vám nemohu nic sdělit, ještě jsem s ní pišiel jen asi dvakrát do běžného společenského styku.

Šiřší informace o jeho činnosti by vám mohli podat soudruzi Jiří Šilic, ředitel Práce, Praha II, Jugenstova 7 a soudr. Jaroslav Ringl, bývalý předseda závodní organizace Práce, bytem Praha XV, Brochaskova 196/6, kteří s ním pišieli více do styku.

Čest předí i  
Karel Svoboda  
Praha II, V Zahradních 2006/18  
len strany od 21.3.1945  
čís. leg. 012,624.

Capture511: recalling the moments of bliss in a joint working-class revolution liberating the virtual heart of post-war Europe...recalling at the onset of its slow-motion decline 1950-1989, letter from Karel Svoboda to the personal management control department in the Prague Ministry of

*External Trade justifying his 1945 stance for Karel Fišer (Michalec) from 9<sup>th</sup> May 1950; facsimile of a photographic negative in an untitled envelope attached to the personal file MV-ABS (Prague) H-231 titled as "Fišer Michalec 'Trockista'".*

5<sup>th</sup> sample: Correspondence by Karel Svoboda about his comrade Karel Fischer Michalec

(see reproduction 511)

*Transcription character by character from the original manuscript, a letter from Karel Svoboda to the human resources verification department in the Prague Ministry of Interior Affairs justifying his stance for Karel Fischer (Michalec) from 9<sup>th</sup> May 1950; facsimile of a photographic negative in an untitled envelope attached to the personal file MV-ABS (Prague) H-231 titled as "Fischer Michalec 'Trockista'".*

'[6]992 Praha dne 9. května 1950.

[stamp] JEDNOTL.

'Tit.

Ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu  
oddělení kádrově prověřovací,  
Třída politických vězňů 20,  
Praha II.

Vážení soudruzi,

k vašemu dopisu č.j. K/3 PO z 5.5.t.r. oznamuji:

Ačkoliv jsem podepisoval soudruhu Karlu Fišerovi přihlášku do strany, znal jsem ho cel[k]em málo. Pomatuji se, že nastoupil asi v r. 1934 nebo 1936 do byvalého Práva lidu jako administrační úředník. Byl jsem v té době zaměstnán v tehdejším Právu lidu jako strojní sazeč, ale nepřišel jsem s ním do styku. Poznal jsem jej až v roce 1945 v revoluci.

Tehdy jsem byl předsedou Revoluční závodní rady Práva lidu. Vzpomínám

si, že se soudruh Fišer činně zúčastnil všech prací, spojených s vydáváním prvního svobodného Rudého práva a Práce (zachycování a veřejňování zpráv zahraničního rozhlasu atd.) Ihned po revoluci (myslím asi kolem 15. května 1945) odešel soudr. Fišer do Vydavatelstva Práce, takže jsem s ním na krátkou dobu ztratil styk. Teprve, když jsem 1. srpna 1945 nastoupil do služeb Vydavatelstva Práce, požádal mne soudr. Fišer o podpis na přihlášce do strany. Pamatuji se trochu z historie strany, kdo to byl soudruh Fišer (Michalec). Myslím, že byl asi v r. 1924 nebo 25 vyloučen ze strany, kde býval vysokým funkcionářem mládeže (krajským nebo dokonce vyšším tajemníkem).

Přesto jsem tehdy po květnu 1945, když jsem viděl masový nábor do strany a zároveň to, že jsou přijímáni i bývalí členové, kteří vystoupili s manifestem proti straně (spisovatelé), myslil, že je vše v pořádku a že event. difference z minulosti, si soudruh Fišer vyřídí s vedením strany sám.

Jako odborník byl význačných kvalit. V závodě zastával funkci ředitele administrace a tajemníka ústředního ředitelství. Pracoval aktivně ve výboru Závodní organizace, avšak proti jeho způsobu jednání (více[ ] méně nařizovací způsob), byly námitky i z řad členů strany. Toho využilo tehdejší pravické vedení zaměstnaneckých orgánů a zorganizovalo proti němu akci, která skončila v červenci nebo srpnu 1946, odvoláním soudr. Fišera ze závodu.

Nelze mu nic vytýkat pokud jde o dodržování linie strany, avšak způsob, jakým to činil, odrazoval od něho lidi.

O jeho manželce vám nemohu nic sdělit, ježto jsem s ní přišel jen asi dvakrát do běžného společenského styku.

[B]lížší informace o jeho činnosti by vám mohli podat soudruzi Jiří Síla, šéfredaktor Práce, Praha II, Jungmannova 7 a soudr. Jaroslav Fingl, bývalý předseda Závodní organisace Práce, bytem Praha XV, Procházkova 196/6. kteří s ním přišli více do styku.

Čest práci!

[signature] Svoboda Karel

Karel Svoboda

Praha XI, V Zahrádkách 2026/1[8]

člen strany od 21.5.1945

čís. leg. 012.625

(6) 992 Prague on 9th May 1950. [stamped:] original copy [?]

to

The Ministry of Foreign Trade Department of Human Resources Review,

Square of the Political Prisoners<sup>180</sup> [house number] 20,

Prague II.

Respected Comrades,

[answering] to your letter number j. K / 3 from 5.5. this year I inform you:

Although I have signed [as one of the two necessary vouches]

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<sup>180</sup> The square was renamed after the liberation of Prague in honour of political prisoners under the previous regime.

for the application of comrade Karl Fišer to the [Czechoslovak Communist] party, I knew him very little. I remember that he joined the former “Práva lidu”<sup>181</sup> as an administrative clerk in about 1934 or 1936. At that time, I was employed in what was then “Práva lidu” as a machine typesetter, but I did not come into contact with him. I only made his acquaintance in the year 1945 during revolution.

At that time, I was the chairman of the revolutionary workers council at “Práva lidu”. I remember that the comrade Fišer actively participated in all efforts to edit the first free “Rudy pravo a Práce”<sup>182</sup> (receiving and assembling foreign radio reports, etc.). Immediately after the revolution (I think about around 15. May 1945) Fišer left us to join the publishing house “Práce”<sup>183</sup>, so for a short period of time I lost contact with him. But on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1945, when I started working in the “Práce” publishing house myself, comrade Fišer asked me to sign [as a vouch] on his application to the party. I remember a bit from the history of the party, who was comrade Fišer (Michalec). I think, it was about 1924 or ‘25 that he was expelled from the party,<sup>184</sup> where he was high youth functionary (regional or at last the deputy secretary).

Yet then, after May 1945, when I saw the mass recruitment for the party going on and at the same time [I saw] that former members who had come forward with a manifesto against the party (writers/conspirationists?) [were reaccepted as well], I

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<sup>181</sup> „Right of the people“, the name of a Social-Democrat publishing house, editing a daily newspaper of the same name which continues to appear until nowadays.

<sup>182</sup> „Red Right and Labour“ the revolutionary renaming of the formerly Social Democrat Czech publishing giant “Práva lidu”

<sup>183</sup> Czech for “Labour”;

<sup>184</sup> 1927 to be precise.

thought that everything was in order, and that comrade Fišer will himself speak with the direction of the party about eventual differences from the past.

He had notable merits as an expert. In the firm, he reached the functions of a head of the administration and Secretary-General of the Central Board. He participated actively in the council [for workers' self-management] of the enterprise. However, for his way of organising<sup>185</sup> (his more or less brisk method), there were objections, including from among party members. This was used by the then right-wing leadership within the employee council<sup>186</sup> and organised an action against

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<sup>185</sup> Karel Svoboda here probably alludes to the successful polarisation, Karel Fišer provoked in conflict with right-wing Social-Democrats holding on to significant power positions against the workforce. In another written assessment from the contemporary (1950) party representation in the enterprise "Práce", dating from 15<sup>th</sup> May 1950 and probably responding to the same call from the Ministry of Foreign Trade for statements, we get a significantly less favourable general impression of Fišer. However, as far as the scandal with the Social-Democrat right-wingers is concerned, the assessment concedes, that polarization was inevitable, however the swift mode in which Fišer succeeded in bringing it about back in 1946 was not pleasing everyone in the firm, see letter by the KSČ workplace organization of the publishing house "Práce" dating from 15<sup>th</sup> May 1950; documented as a negative in an untitled envelope attached to the personal file MV-ABS (Prague) H-231 titled as "Fischer Michalec 'Trockista'".

<sup>186</sup> Workers council, the slight nuance in naming, chosen by Karel Svoboda is due to certain differences between Early Czechoslovak Socialist workers councils within traditionally proletarian workforces in heavy and textile industry and its counterparts in enterprises with a higher percentage of trained clerks in dependent positions as in this case of the publishing house "Práce". In both variations, the customable rights of the self-management organs were defined

him which resulted in July or August 1946 in the removal of comrade Fišer from the enterprise.

There can be no objection to the fact that he was in compliance with the party line, but the mode, in which he acted made people refrain from him.

About his wife I cannot tell anything, as I happened only once or twice to come into rather superficial social contact with her.

Comrade Jiří Síla, editor in chief at “Práce”, Prague II Jungmannova st. 7, and comrade Jaroslav Fingl, former chairman of the workers’ council at “Práce”, living in Prague XV, Procházkova<sup>187</sup> 196/6, both had more contact with him [than I had].

Honour work!<sup>188</sup>

(Signature)

Svoboda Karel freedom

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largely during the barricade fighting of the Prague May 1945 revolution, when no legal party network was ready to intervene efficiently yet. Fighting back these revolutionary customary rights became a Sisyphus-task in the following decades leading up to spring 1968, compare Peter Heumos et al. ##

<sup>187</sup> “The Promenade St.”, definitely quite a nice neighborhood for a former simple rank-and-file workers’ council delegate, but - according to Prague standards - neighborhoods affordable for working-class rank-and-file were developed as far back as the interwar years.

<sup>188</sup> Traditional greeting from within the Czech working-class movement, became overall standard in the years after 1945;

Prague XI, V Zahrádkách<sup>189</sup> 2026/1[8] Member of the party  
since 21.5.1945

[Party membership] document number 012.625

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<sup>189</sup> “In the gardens”, compare footnote on “The Promenade St.”